

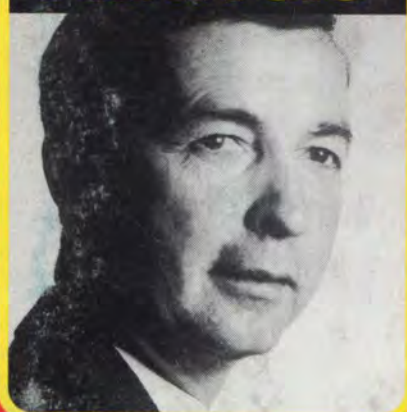
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No.164

NOVEMBER 1997

**BOOK AND
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IMPORTANT

Every endeavour has been made to ensure that all the information and values published in this magazine are as accurate and up-to-date as possible. Neither the publishers nor their agents can be held responsible for any errors or omissions; nor shall they be liable for any loss or damage to any person acting on the information contained in the magazine. Naturally, the Editor will welcome any corrections at any time.

Book and Magazine Collector is published on the third Friday of each month. Here are the dates of the next advertising deadlines:

ISSUE

ADVERTISING DEADLINE

DECEMBER ISSUE (on sale 21st November) 21st October

JANUARY ISSUE (on sale 19th December) 25th November

A DEAD CERT

Some 36 years ago, a retired champion jockey sat down to write the opening lines of a crime thriller — his first novel. He had already published a successful volume of memoirs, and had worked for some time as a columnist for the *Sunday Express*, but he had never attempted to write fiction before.

The ex-jockey's name was Dick Francis, and that thriller, *Dead Cert*, proved to be a huge success. It was the start of a truly phenomenal career, encompassing some 36 novels — the latest just published — plus a handful of anthologies and non-fiction works. What is extraordinary about Francis is the sheer *consistency* of his work. Quite simply, he has never written a bad book, a factor which goes some way to explaining his extraordinary popularity with collectors. It says a great deal for Francis that all his novels, and particularly the early ones, are now more sought-after than ever, with jacketed firsts of *Dead Cert* currently selling for upwards of £1,500. Our lead feature considers all his most collectable editions, and includes a complete update of current prices.

Of course, Dick Francis came to writing after a long and successful career as a jockey, but another of our featured authors, Oscar Wilde, was wedded to literature from his earliest years. He famously claimed to have put his talent into his writing, and his genius into his life, but we should not allow that statement to lessen our opinion of his works. Wilde was one of the few great writers to produce masterpieces in all the main literary disciplines: the novel (*The Picture of Dorian Gray*), the short story ('Lord Arthur Savile's Crime'), children's fiction ('The Happy Prince' and other stories), drama (*The Importance of Being Earnest*), poetry (*The Ballad of Reading Gaol*), the essay ('The Soul of Man') and letters (*De Profundis*). The circumstances of his tragic life have ensured him lasting notoriety, but it is his genius as an author that guarantees him immortality. This month's feature considers all his most collectable editions.

Anthony Powell's popularity with collectors is bound to receive something of a boost thanks to the current TV adaptation of his great novel sequence, 'A Dance to the Music of Time'. However, he hardly needs further promotion as, over the last few years, he has become one of the most collectable of all twentieth-century authors on merit alone. Fine copies of his earliest novels now sell for three-figure sums, and complete sets of the 'Dance' series can fetch £2,000 or more. Our survey looks at all his first editions, as well the most collectable reissues.

Our other articles feature: author and traveller, Naomi Mitchison; fantasy writer, L. Sprague de Camp; and children's author/illustrator, Val Biro.

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DICK FRANCIS

HIS FIRST EDITIONS
ARE MORE
SOUGHT-AFTER
THAN EVER

BY DAVID HOWARD

It has been said that the novels of Dick Francis are the ideal accompaniment to idleness — a tribute to his flinty, no-nonsense style of storytelling which has delighted millions and become the envy of his peers. Like the man himself, Francis's novels are devoid of pretension. They just rattle along at the pace of an odds-on favourite, with the reader clinging desperately to the reins.

For collectors, the rise in the values of Francis first editions has been equally swift. Fuelled largely (but by no means entirely) by American enthusiasts, the prices of Francis's early novels have almost doubled since we last featured him in November 1994 (see BMC 128). Fine copies of his first novel, *Dead Cert* (1962) — which, with a lamentable lack of foresight, I can remember selling for under £100 in the early 1980s — are now fetching £1,500 and more. (A copy in a frayed dustjacket sold for £1,323 at Bloomsbury Book Auctions in March.) Indeed, among post-war thriller-writers, only Ian Fleming attracts higher prices.

Richard Stanley Francis was born in Tenby, Pembrokeshire, on 31st October 1920. Although his parents soon moved to Holyport near Maidenhead in Berkshire, Francis spent as much time as possible at the family farm, Coedcanlas, an extensive property which



sloped down to the Cleddeau estuary in South Wales. It was here, at the age of five, that he had his first experience of riding. His long-suffering mount was a donkey, on top of which Francis would jump a small rail fence whilst sitting backwards!

Horses were in the family blood. Francis's grandfather was a champion amateur jockey, and his father — a manager at the stables in Holyport — was a keen rider before the First World War. It was no surprise, therefore, that from an early age Francis set his heart on becoming a professional jockey — an ambition which even an horrendous riding accident in his early teens failed to quash.

Francis found his schooling at Maidenhead Grammar and, later, a private establishment

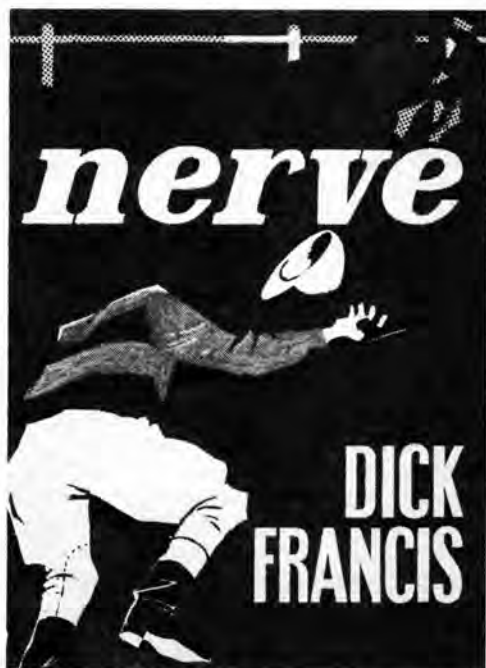
to be "an intolerable interruption to the serious business of life", and his attendance was sporadic. By 1938, the family had moved to Embrook House near Wokingham where his father set up his own stables in the grounds and recruited Dick to look after the horses.

The war was a further hindrance to Francis's steeplechasing ambitions. Unsuccessful in his attempts to enter the cavalry, he joined the R.A.F. as an air-frame fitter and later as a pilot of Spitfires, Wellingtons (which he hated — too slow) and Lancasters. This experience he put to good use in two of his novels: *Flying Finish* (1966), which is centred around the international air transport of racehorses and brood mares; and *Rat Race* (1970), in which the hero is an ex-war-time pilot now running an air courier service.

In 1947, Francis married Mary Brenchley. They had met at a family wedding in 1945, and immediately fell in love. As Francis



The first edition of Francis's debut novel, *Dead Cert*, now sells for upwards of £1,500 in fine condition.



The follow-up, *Nerve*, is also highly sought-after, and now fetches as much as £500 in the dustjacket.

recalls in his autobiography, *The Sport of Queens* (1957), "to my astonishment, before we had even spoken, I found myself thinking, 'This is my wife'". It was to be a long and fruitful partnership in more ways than one, because Mary — a former publisher's proof-reader — has become the chief researcher for Francis's novels. For example, she became an expert photographer for *Reflex* (1980 — the photographs of Francis on his dustjackets are by Mary); she studied oil painting for *In the Frame* (1976); and, for the aforementioned *Flying Finish*, she obtained a pilot's licence, and even wrote a beginner's guide to aviation entitled *Flying Start*. In addition, she joined her husband in founding an air taxi business called Merrick Air, which is still in business today, albeit under different ownership.

Times were not always so rewarding. After Francis became a professional jockey in 1948, he found life somewhat precarious. The horses he was given to ride were often unpredictable no-hopers which more experienced jockeys refused to ride. His big

break came in 1949 when he was invited to ride for Lord Bicester, who owned many of the best steeplechasers in the country.

With his racing career now whipped into life, Francis soon became one of the finest jockeys in Britain. He now describes this time as "the best ten years of my life". He rode almost 350 winners, fulfilling every rider's ambition by becoming Champion Jockey in 1954.

And then there was the 1956 Grand National. In *The Sport of Queens*, Francis writes: "A post-mortem one day may find the words 'Devon Loch' engraved on my heart." Anyone who has seen the cine film of Devon Loch's inexplicable fall just yards from the finishing post will no doubt agree that it is one of the greatest sporting mysteries of all time. Yet for Francis it was a turning point which shaped the rest of his life. In short, he became more famous for *not* winning the race than he would have become had he won.

ARTICLES

His retirement from racing in the following year drew many offers of employment. Principal among these was a request from the *Sunday Express* for four articles which would be ghost-written by staff journalists. Francis agreed, but only if he could write the articles himself. So began an association with the newspaper which lasted until 1973.

Today, Francis generously attributes his success as an author to the discipline instilled in him while at the *Sunday Express*. He took such pride in preparing perfect copy that if an editor found an unnecessary word he would feel distraught for days.

It was at around this time that a chance meeting with a literary agent inspired Francis to write his autobiography, *The Sport of Queens* (1957), which he penned aboard his boat on the Norfolk Broads. Michael Joseph, for whom Francis had ridden several horses, not only agreed to publish the book but also secured first option on anything else that he was to write. *The Sport of Queens* was such a success that the small initial print-run sold out in a week. It is now a very scarce title, although it is much less sought-after than his early novels, and values are consequently



Francis occasionally uses overseas settings for his novels. *Smokescreen* is largely set in South Africa.

lower. Nevertheless, a price of £200+ is substantial enough for a book that is only really of interest to devotees of the Turf.

Revised hardback editions of *The Sport of Queens* were published in 1968, 1974, 1982 and 1988. These have additional chapters covering Dick's life as a successful novelist. In addition, a Pan paperback edition was published in 1995 with a revised thirteenth chapter, as well as a new chapter detailing Francis's life between 1988 and 1995.

FINANCES

Francis's momentous decision to try his hand at writing crime fiction owed less to inspiration than it did to a marked drop in the family finances following his retirement from racing. Mary pointed out the threadbare state of the carpet in their modest bungalow near Didcot in Oxfordshire, and the loud noise from the engine of his old car spoke for

Dick Francis IN THE FRAME



Novelist H.R.F. Keating described *In the Frame* as "about fifty times better than most crime fiction".

itself. With the full backing of his wife, Francis set to work on his novel, expecting the writing to be easy and the rewards sparse. As it turned out, writing proved to be, in his own words, "the hardest, most-self-analysing task I had ever attempted". It was also the most rewarding.

The result was *Dead Cert*, which was accepted by Michael Joseph in a record twelve days and arrived in the bookshops in January 1962. Reading the novel today, you become aware of Francis's natural talent for writing thrillers, as well as his rare ability to describe a believable character without slowing the pace of his plots.

His hero in this book is Alan York, who sets out to prove that his jockey colleague's death during a horse race was not accidental. Francis's opening sentence is wonderful: "The mingled smells of hot horse and cold river mist filled my nostrils." Thereafter, he

strings together a plot that involves bribery, a betting scam, a protection racket and the eventual surprise discovery of the man behind it all. It's enough to put you off betting for life, but from the first few pages of *Dead Cert* it is evident that the shady world of racing is an ideal setting for thrillers. (Francis is strangely reticent on the subject of real-life racing scams, although he does admit to once putting down the phone on someone who was offering him money to throw a race.)

REVIEWS

Critical reviews of *Dead Cert* were very encouraging, and further encouragement came from Michael Joseph in the shape of a cheque for £300 and a request for more novels. Francis obliged with *Nerve* (1964), the story of a promising young jockey, Robert Finn, whose string of winners suddenly dries up amidst whispers from owners and trainers that he has lost his nerve — the inspiration for the typically laconic title. Again, the novel is teeming with memorable characters, most notably the suave, envy-ridden TV racing pundit, Maurice Kemp-Lore — a sort of monstrous Brough Scott — who must be one of Francis's most villainous creations. Once again, values of first editions of *Nerve* have leaped in recent years. Collectors will now have to pay between £400 and £500 for a Fine copy complete with the jacket, which shows the hero lying on the turf after a fall.

I should mention here that it is only truly Fine copies in comparable dustjackets which attract such high prices. Inscriptions

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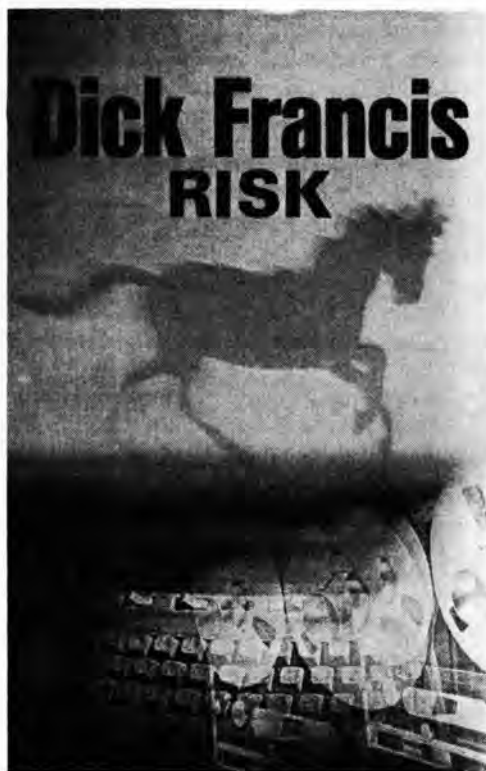
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(especially of the sentimental variety), price-cut or frayed dustjackets, and stained boards or pages lessen values considerably.

For Kicks (1965) opens in Australia, at the successful stud farm of the hero, Daniel Roke. He is approached by an English aristocrat to investigate a doping scandal, and so begins an adventure which eventually leads Roke to the stables of Hedley Huber, the shadiest trainer in Britain. Roke's cover as a stable boy allows Francis to explore the relentlessly harsh life of these would-be jockeys. As before, the first edition is scarce, and you can expect to pay between £200 and £300 for a Fine copy in the dustjacket.

With Francis's growing popularity, Michael Joseph now considered that he would make an ideal author to promote for the lucrative Christmas market. Not wishing there to be an eighteen-month gap between



So popular was Francis by the late 1970s that Pan printed around a quarter-of-a-million copies of *Risk*.



Francis's wife, Mary, became an expert photographer to assist his research for the 1980 novel, *Reflex*.

books, the publisher asked Francis for a further novel in 1965, to be published in November. He duly obliged, writing *Odds Against* in record time, and to his credit it shows no signs of being hurried. Indeed, the book, which features the one-handed (from a racing accident — need you ask?) private investigator, Sid Halley, is up there with the very best of Francis's work. The novel eventually became the basis for the 1970s Yorkshire TV series, *The Racing Game*. This was memorable, not only for the quality of the writing, but also for the portrayal of Halley by the actor, Mike Gwilym.

The Racing Game was important for Francis in two ways. When shown on American TV, it more than doubled the sales of his novels and effectively launched his bestselling career Stateside. Gwilym's intense performances also persuaded Francis

to write the sequel, *Whip Hand* (1979), one of only two occasions when he has reprised a character. (His 1986 novel, *Bolt*, features some of the names from *Break In*, published the previous year.)

In *Whip Hand*, Francis sets out to explore the mental difficulties of someone trying to come to terms with the loss of a limb. This is the most psychologically wringing, least light-hearted of all Francis's works. Indeed, in *The Sport of Queens* he admits that its writing gave him "insomnia for months". Fine copies of *Whip Hand* are numerous and should cost no more than £15. *Odds Against* is much scarcer, and sells for between £140 and £180 in Fine condition.

PRINT-RUN

By the time *Flying Finish* appeared in 1966, the initial print-run had increased to 10,000 copies. Nevertheless, these still sell for £125-£150 in Fine condition.

With *Flying Finish* based partly in Italy, Francis then crossed the Atlantic and set much of *Blood Sport* (1967) in America's

Yellowstone National Park. His protagonist this time was Gene Hawkins, the most Bond-like of all his creations, albeit with a definite non-007 predilection for black depressions. Avid fans of Francis will by now have noted his tendency to lumber his heroes with physical or emotional handicaps. In *Knock Down* (1974), it's a drunken brother; in *Trial Run* (1978), it's asthma; in *Smokescreen* (1972), it's a child who, as Francis puts it, "isn't quite the round shilling". In *Banker* (1982), the lead character is hopelessly in love with his boss' wife; in *Forfeit* (1968), his own wife has polio. (Mary Francis involuntarily did the research for this when she contracted the disease early in their marriage.) I could go on, but suffice to say that Francis's heroes tend to be like Fanny in Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park*: accustomed to a life of suffering yet convinced of their own essential decency.

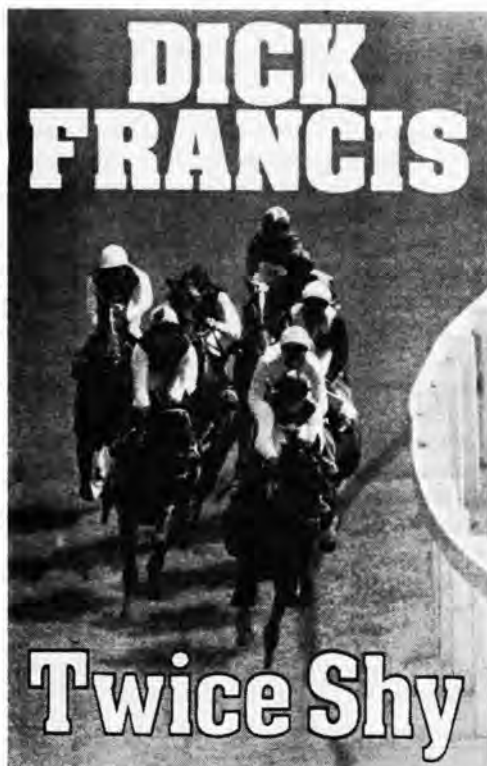
Francis put his experience on the *Express* to good use in *Forfeit* (1968), where his hero is Bert Checkov, a racing correspondent working for the *Sunday Blaze*, with an unhappy knack of tipping non-starters.

YOUR FAMILY IS UNIQUE

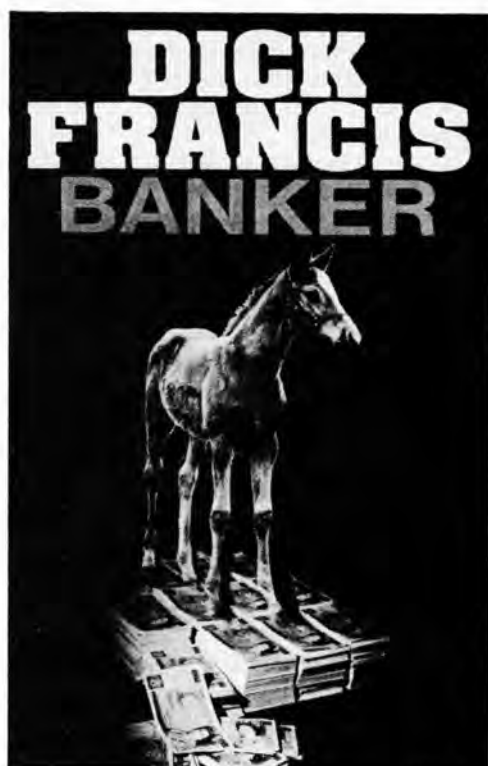
and this magazine will help you find out a lot more about your ancestors

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Each critic has his own favourite Francis thriller, but many fans would pick *Twice Shy* as a highlight.



Like many of Francis's characters, the hero of *Banker* has a painful secret: an infatuation for his boss's wife.

Equally excellent is the Edgar award-winning *Enquiry* (1969), which describes how a top steeplechase jockey loses his racing licence.

On the subject of awards, Francis won another 'Edgar' (issued by the Mystery Writers of America, and named after Edgar Allan Poe) for *Forfeit* in 1981. On this side of the Atlantic, he won a Silver Dagger with *For Kicks* (1965) and a Gold Dagger for *Whip Hand* (1979). On top of that, he has received the Crime Writers' Association top award in 1989: a Cartier Diamond Dagger for lifetime achievement.

Fine copies of *Forfeit* and *Enquiry* are both scarce and fetch £70-£90 and £60-£80 respectively. The earlier *Blood Sport* sells for £80-£100 in Fine condition in its attractive blue dustjacket.

At around this time, Francis began to write the occasional short story. Many of these were

listed in the extensive bibliography published in the November 1994 issue of BMC and are again listed here. In addition, I have unearthed three more stories: 'A Day of Wine and Roses', which was published in the May 1973 edition of the American magazine, *Sports Illustrated*; 'The Big Story', which appeared in the American anthology, *Ellery Queen's Crime Wave* (1976); and finally 'Nightmare', which was included in another U.S. collection, *Ellery Queen's Searches and Seizures* (1977).

In the early 1970s, Francis consolidated his worldwide reputation with a trio of outstanding thrillers: *Rat Race* (1970; a good jacket, incidentally, depicting a revolver balanced on top of a wine glass); the equally polished *Bone Crack* (1971); and *Smokescreen* (1972), which is set largely in South Africa.

Today, Francis's novels have been translated into over twenty languages, and he

has sold in excess of thirty million books. Unusually, his commercial success has been matched by critical acclaim. Philip Larkin, C.P. Snow and Kingsley Amis have all enthused about his books. Despite this, Francis himself remains a modest, unassuming and almost anonymous man — a characteristic he shares with many of his fictional heroes. In fact, he is generally bemused by all the fuss surrounding his books, and is reluctant to talk about them.

Ask most writers to pick a favourite passage from one of their books and they will immediately respond. When a journalist asked Francis the same question about *The Edge* (1988), the author gave an embarrassed laugh and replied, "Sorry, I can't think of any".

STUDIES

Quite what Francis made of the two critical studies of his work published in the 1980s it is difficult to imagine. Melvyn Barnes' *Dick Francis* (Ungar, U.S., 1986) was mentioned in our previous bibliography. Another title is *Dick Francis* by J. Madison Davis, published by Twayne of Boston in 1989. Francis's steeplechasing career is explored in detail in Bryony Fuller's *Dick Francis — Steeplechase Jockey* (1994), which can be picked up for £5-£10.

With such high values being asked for all of Francis's early first editions, most collectors will have to find suitable alternatives. The first paperback editions (*Dead Cert* and *Nerve* were published by Penguin, all the others by Pan) make cheap if fragile substitutes, but more impressive are the three omnibus editions which Michael Joseph published in the late 1970s, collecting together Francis's first nine novels. These are: *Three Winners* (1977; comprising *Dead Cert*, *Nerve* and *For Kicks*); *Three Favourites* (1978; *Odds Against*, *Flying Finish* and *Blood Sport*); and *Three to Follow* (1979; *Forfeit*, *Enquiry* and *Rat Race*). All appeared in the same handsome black-and-white livery, and today can be found for £10 or less.

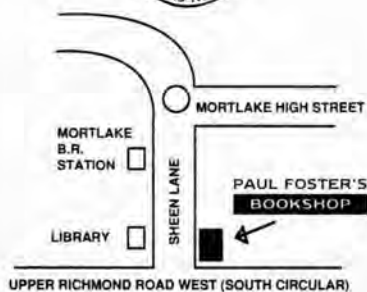
Titles from the early 1970s onwards are well within the budgets of most collectors. Indeed, at least two-thirds of Francis's works can still be found for around the price of a



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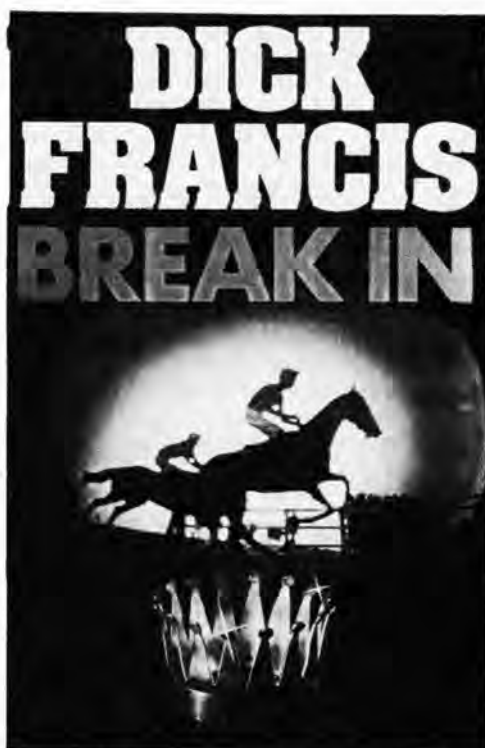
On the surface, *Slay Ride* (1973) is concerned with rum goings-on in the Norwegian race world. On another level, however, it is also an exploration of what it means to be a parent and allow your children to enter a hostile world. This was no doubt inspired by Dick and Mary's experience of bringing up their own two sons, Merrick (a former trainer of horses who now runs an air transport company) and Felix (a former physics teacher who is currently employed by his father as a part-time researcher). Fine copies of *Slay Ride* currently fetch between £25 and £35.

INJURIES

Numbered among Dick Francis's numerous racing injuries is a dislocated shoulder, which still troubles him today. A similar injury is sustained by the hero of *Knock Down* (1974), probably the least successful of all Francis's novels. Prices are nevertheless unaffected, and Fine copies still fetch between £20 and £30. For the same money, however, you can acquire a Fine copy of *High Stakes* (1975), which *The Sporting Life* declared to be "the best of all Dick's books".

It was followed by *In the Frame* (1976), a story about two artists which opens in England but quickly moves on to Australia and New Zealand (the first edition includes a handy map at the beginning of the book). Fine copies of *In the Frame*, which H.R.F. Keating described as being "about fifty times better than most crime fiction", can still be found for under £30.

**Next issue
on sale
21 November**



You shouldn't pay more than £10 for even Fine copies of later novels such as *Break In* (1985).

By the late 1970s, Francis had established himself as one of Britain's bestselling authors, a fact reflected in the large initial print-runs of his books from this period. The first impression of *Trial Run* (1978) was 45,000 copies, while the Pan edition of *Risk* (1977) ran to an extraordinary 245,000 paperbacks.

Francis's success is cumulative, each novel having outsold its predecessors. He also enjoys the rare distinction of having all 37 of his books still in print, a situation which will continue for at least as long as a new manuscript arrives on his publisher's desk every summer.

His working habits are nothing if not predictable. On the first day of each year, he begins work on a new book, having already undertaken the relevant research with his wife. He rises at 6.45am, breakfasts on orange juice and coffee and, after a quick dip in the pool, he is ready to begin work.

He writes with a pencil in an exercise book and dictates the result to a typist, before typing a final draft onto a word processor.

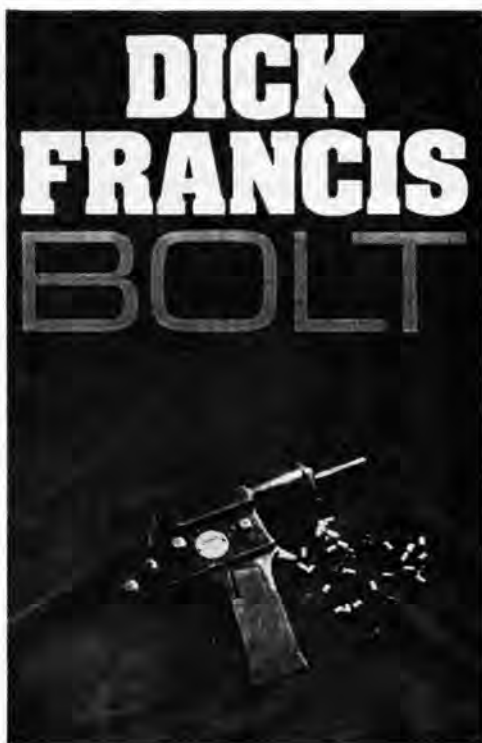
Francis is almost alone in the writing world in having a contract that doesn't allow his publishers to make any changes. In later editions of *The Sport of Queens*, he declares: "My first draft is it. I can't rewrite to any extent. I've tried once or twice, but I haven't the mental stamina and I feel all the time that although what I'm attempting may be different it won't be better and may very well be worse, because my heart isn't in it."

His publishers have the novel by May, he corrects proofs in June, and in July and August he takes a holiday in preparation for the early autumn launch. It is a routine which has gone on more or less unchanged since 1962. As a nice touch, and to show their appreciation of Francis's professionalism, Michael Joseph presents him with a special leather-bound copy of his book every Christmas. These must be the ultimate collectors' items, although to my knowledge none has ever appeared on the market.

DE LUXE

On the subject of unusual items, three of his novels have also appeared in a De Luxe format. The first of these was a signed edition of *Straight* (1989; 500 copies), issued by Michael Joseph in a leather binding and slipcase. These currently sell for £60-£80. More recently, the Scorpion Press of Blakeney in Gloucestershire have issued signed editions of *Wild Horses* (1994; 99 numbered, plus twenty lettered, copies — the latter largely reserved for the author), and *To the Hilt* (1996; 99 numbered, plus fifteen lettered, copies). These feature appreciations by, respectively, H.R.F. Keating and Margaret Yorke, and now fetch up to £60.

Michael Joseph also published a signed edition of *Lester* (1986), Francis's biography of his close friend, Lester Piggott. This was limited to 500 copies and, complete with the slipcase, these currently fetch between £40 and £60. There were no fewer than two limited editions of *Great Racing Stories* (1989), one of several books edited by Francis. Full details of these, and all his other non-fiction works, are included in our bibliography.



Unusually, Francis reused some of the characters from Break In when he came to write the follow-up, Bolt.

Returning to the novels, all of Francis's first editions from 1980 onwards are so common that collectors shouldn't accept copies in anything less than Fine condition, nor pay more than £10 for them. Most secondhand bookshops have a good selection from this period, often at prices of around £5.

At about this time, Francis's early novels began to be reissued by mass-market publishers such as Octopus, Reader's Digest and W.H. Smith. I need hardly say that, for the majority of collectors, these editions are beyond the pale.

By the mid-1980s, Mary Francis had begun to suffer from asthma, exacerbated by the cold Oxfordshire winters. To counter this, the couple moved to a high-security condominium in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. Here Francis wrote *Hot Money* (1987), *The Edge* (1988), *Straight* (1989), *Longshot* (1990), *Comeback* (1991) and *Driving Force* (1992).

In line with fashion, these books became increasingly violent, although, compared to many modern writers, Francis's rougher scenes were described in a commendably muted fashion. However, the trend was noted by his number one fan, the Queen Mother, and he duly toned down his writing. Their friendship goes back to Francis's riding days ('Devon Loch' was owned by the Queen Mother), and every autumn an inscribed copy of Francis's latest novel arrives at Clarence House.

Today, Dick and Mary Francis live on Grand Cayman, an island in the British West Indies about the size of the Isle of Wight yet with a fifth of the population. All of his thrillers since 1993 — including his new novel, *10lb Penalty* — have been written there in his study, overlooking the Caribbean. Happily, he has no intention of retiring, although he has spoken recently about extending his schedule and producing a novel every two years.

10lb Penalty is again vintage Francis. There's a 'set-up' on the very first page and, as ever, the pace throughout rarely dips below flat-out. Unusually for Francis, there's a political dimension, in that the father of the narrator has ambitions to become Prime Minister. Francis was inspired to write the novel after meeting John Major in the summer of 1996, and the book's dedication reads simply, "To No 10 Downing Street".

As an experiment, whilst writing this feature I asked several Dick Francis enthusiasts which, in their opinion, were his three best books. My choice would be *Bonecrack*, *Twice Shy* and *Banker*, but, interestingly, no two people picked the same set of titles. Most authors have a 'highlight', yet it seems that all of Francis's novels come under that category. Long may he continue to produce them.

Francis's new novel, '10lb Penalty', is published by Michael Joseph, price £16.99.

DICK FRANCIS UK BIBLIOGRAPHY

A guide to current values of first editions in Fine condition without/with dustjackets.

NOVELS

DEAD CERT (Michael Joseph, 1962)	£100-£125 (£1,500+)
NERVE (Michael Joseph, 1964)	£40-£50 (£400-£500)
FOR KICKS (Michael Joseph, 1965)	£20-£30 (£200-£300)
ODDS AGAINST (Michael Joseph, 1965)	£15-£20 (£140-£180)
FLYING FINISH (Michael Joseph, 1966)	£15-£20 (£125-£150)
BLOOD SPORT (Michael Joseph, 1967)	£10-£15 (£80-£100)
FORFEIT (Michael Joseph, 1968)	£10-£15 (£70-£90)
ENQUIRY (Michael Joseph, 1969)	£10-£15 (£60-£80)
RAT RACE (Michael Joseph, 1970)	£6-£10 (£40-£50)
BONECRACK (Michael Joseph, 1971)	£6-£10 (£30-£40)
SMOKESCREEN (Michael Joseph, 1972)	£6-£10 (£25-£35)
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RISK (Michael Joseph, 1977)	£2-£3 (£15-£20)
TRIAL RUN (Michael Joseph, 1978)	£2-£3 (£10-£15)
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REFLEX (Michael Joseph, 1980)	£2-£3 (£6-£10)
TWICE SHY (Michael Joseph, 1981)	£2-£3 (£6-£10)
BANKER (Michael Joseph, 1982)	£2-£3 (£6-£10)
THE DANGER (Michael Joseph, 1983)	£2-£3 (£6-£10)
PROOF (Michael Joseph, 1984)	£2-£3 (£6-£10)
BREAK IN (Michael Joseph, 1985)	£2-£3 (£6-£10)
BOLT (Michael Joseph, 1986)	£2-£3 (£6-£10)
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STRAIGHT (Michael Joseph, 1989)	£2-£3 (£6-£10)
ditto. Signed Edition (limited to 500 copies, signed by the author; quarter leather binding; in slipcase) (Michael Joseph, 1989)	£60-£80

LONGSHOT (Michael Joseph, 1990)	£2-£3 (£6-£10)
COMEBACK (Michael Joseph, 1991)	£2-£3 (£6-£10)
DRIVING FORCE (Michael Joseph, 1992)	£2-£3 (£6-£10)
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WILD HORSES (Michael Joseph, 1994)	£2-£3 (£6-£10)
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ditto. De Luxe Edition (limited to 20 lettered copies, signed by the author; De Luxe binding) (Scorpion Press, 1994)	£100-£125
COME TO GRIEF (Michael Joseph, 1995)	£2-£3 (£6-£10)
TO THE HILT (Michael Joseph, 1996)	£2-£3 (£6-£10)
ditto. Signed Edition (limited to 99 numbered copies, signed by the author; quarter leather binding) (Scorpion Press, 1996)	£40-£60
ditto. De Luxe Edition (limited to fifteen lettered copies, signed by the author; De Luxe binding)	£100-£125
101b PENALTY (Michael Joseph, 1997)	in print £16.99

OMNIBUS EDITIONS

THREE WINNERS (contains 'Dead Cert', 'Nerve' and 'For Kicks') (Michael Joseph, 1977)	£2-£3 (£6-£10)
THREE FAVOURITES (contains 'Odds Against', 'Flying Finish' and 'Blood Sport') (Michael Joseph, 1978)	£2-£3 (£6-£10)
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SHORT STORIES

A CARROT FOR A CHESTNUT (Argosy Magazine, May 1970)	£6-£10
ditto (in 'The Welcome Collection') (Michael Joseph, 1972)	£2-£3 (£6-£10)
THE GIFT (in 'Winters Crimes 5') (Macmillan, 1973)	£2-£3 (£8-£12)
A DAY OF WINE AND ROSES (in 'Sports Illustrated', U.S., May 1973)	£6-£10
THE BIG STORY (in 'Ellery Queen's Crime Wave') (Putnam, U.S., 1976)	£2-£3 (£6-£10)
NIGHTMARE (in 'Ellery Queen's Searches and Seizures') (Davis, U.S., 1977)	£2-£3 (£6-£10)
TWENTY-ONE GOOD MEN AND TRUE (in 'Verdict of Thirteen') (Faber, 1979)	£2-£3 (£6-£10)
THE DAY OF THE LOSERS (in 'John Creasey's Crime Collection') (Gollancz, 1980)	£2-£3 (£6-£10)
ditto (in 'Deadly Odds', edited by Richard Peyton) (Souvenir Press, 1986)	£2-£3 (£6-£10)

MISCELLANEOUS

THE SPORT OF QUEENS (autobiography) (Michael Joseph, 1957)	£30-£40 (£200+)
ditto. Second [Revised] Edition (Michael Joseph, 1968)	£3-£5 (£8-£12)
ditto. Third [Revised] Edition (Michael Joseph, 1974)	£2-£3 (£6-£10)
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ditto. Fifth [Revised] Edition (Michael Joseph, 1988)	£2-£3 (£6-£10)
ditto. Paperback Edition (with revised thirteenth chapter and postscript) (Pan, 1985)	£3-£5
James, David and Stephens, Wilson (editor): IN PRAISE OF HUNTING (contains Francis's article 'Hunting and the Horse') (Hollis & Carter, 1960)	£2-£3
Williams, Dorian (editor): THE HORSEMAN'S YEAR (contains Francis's article, 'National Hunt Retrospect') (Collins, 1962)	£3-£5 (£8-£12)
BEST RACING AND CHASING STORIES. Edited and Introduced by Dick Francis and John Welcome [John Needham Huggard Brennan] (Faber, 1966)	£3-£5 (£8-£12)
THE RACING MAN'S BEDSIDE BOOK. Edited by Dick Francis and John Welcome (Faber, 1969)	£2-£3 (£6-£10)
BEST RACING AND CHASING STORIES 2. Edited and Introduced by Dick Francis and John Welcome (Faber, 1972)	£3-£5 (£8-£12)
LESTER: THE OFFICIAL BIOGRAPHY (Michael Joseph, 1986)	£2-£3 (£6-£10)
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GREAT RACING STORIES. Edited by Dick Francis and John Welcome (Bellew, 1989)	£2-£3 (£6-£10)
ditto. Signed Edition (limited to 175 numbered copies, signed by Dick Francis and John Welcome; quarter leather binding) (Bellew, 1989)	£150-£200
ditto. De Luxe Edition (limited to 75 copies, signed by Dick Francis and John Welcome; full leather binding) (Bellew, 1989)	£250-£300

ESSENTIAL READING

Barnes, Melvyn: DICK FRANCIS (Ungar, U.S., 1986)	£3-£5 (£8-£12)
Davis, J. Madison: DICK FRANCIS (Twayne, U.S., 1989)	£3-£5 (£8-£12)
Fuller, Bryony: DICK FRANCIS — STEEPLECHASE JOCKEY (Michael Joseph, 1994)	£2-£3 (£6-£10)

NAOMI MITCHISON

A BIRTHDAY TRIBUTE BY HELEN MACLEOD

This month, Naomi Mitchison will be celebrating her 100th birthday. She has an extraordinary, multi-stranded life to look back on. Feminist and left-wing activist, farmer and campaigner for the rights of Scottish Highland crofters, 'white mother' to a Botswana tribe, she is also a prolific novelist, playwright and poet. Over the course of her life, she has published over eighty books, some of which have become classics of their kind.

She has never been far from controversy, and admits that she has always relished "surprising people, confounding their assumptions and taking risks". Ever paradoxical and contradictory, she has been a stout campaigner for birth control, despite having a large family herself, and, although she is part of an upper-class economic and social elite, she aroused establishment hostility in the 1920s and '30s because of her extreme left-wing allegiances.

RADICAL

Given her family background, radical tendencies were probably inevitable. She was born in Edinburgh on 1st November 1897 into the brilliant and eccentric Haldane family. Her father was the physiologist, John Scott Haldane, and her older brother, J.B.S. Haldane, became an eminent professor of genetics. It could be said that the young Naomi had a great deal to live up to!

As children, her older brother, Jack, and herself were extremely close. An atmosphere of scientific curiosity and experiment pervaded the family home. Naomi's first volume of memoirs, *Small Talk* (The Bodley Head, 1973), a vivid child's-eye view, tells of experiments conducted with her brother on mice and guinea pigs while their father worked on the invention of a gas mask that was to save many lives in the coming world war.



Naomi Mitchison, photographed in the 1920s

Naomi's early life was free and unfettered in many ways, but the household was run on strictly Calvinistic lines. The motto imprinted on the Haldane coat of arms bore the legend 'Suffer', and each member of the family was expected to do so in the quest for accomplishment. Young Naomi, however, soon began to bridle against the restrictions imposed by her

gender, her resentment compounded by the fact that she had attended a boys' school until the age of twelve.

She was to explore these imposed limitations — and the love, admiration and rivalry she felt towards her brother — in her early novels, albeit obliquely. Later, in her second volume of memoirs, *All Change Here: Girlhood and Marriage* (The Bodley Head, 1975), she related the frustrations of being raised largely as a boy and suddenly having to act like a perfect Edwardian lady.

At the outbreak of the First World War, the lives of Naomi and her contemporaries changed irrevocably. Her brother, Jack, went to the Front, while Naomi became a volunteer nurse in London. At the tender age of seventeen, she became engaged to Jack's best friend, Dick Mitchison, "a straightforward, honest and honourable man". She records in her diary being "panic-stricken" at the thought of the impending marriage, which took place two months before her eighteenth birthday. Her worry was that she was not "in love" with Dick, although their union lasted until his death in 1970, despite — or perhaps because of — the fact that within a few years they agreed to have an 'open marriage'. (Decided on in a spirit of experimentation that was to typify their life, the arrangement sometimes proved to be painful and disillusioning.)

The Mitchisons had three children in as many years, and this period coincided with

the appearance of Naomi's first published work, although she had been writing plays and poetry from an early age. Her first novel, *The Conquered*, was published in 1923, to ecstatic notices. Like many of her early books, it has an historical setting, and is written in the form of a quest narrative, while breaking new ground insofar as the protagonist is female. Set during the time of the Roman invasion of Gaul, it is the story of Fionmar and her relationship with her brother, Meromic. A tale full of sibling empathy and rivalry, it is a vivid and violent book that pulls no punches. There is no traditional happy ending, but the book was unusually frank (for the time) in its treatment of sensuality.

REJECTIONS

Perhaps it was the novel's relative explicitness that prompted three rejections before Jonathan Cape — ever the champion of new talent — accepted it in 1923. It immediately made a great impact, people recognising it as something completely new — a novel set in the distant past that was historically and emotionally convincing. "A rare union of simplicity and insight," wrote one reviewer, while E.M. Forster described the novel as "moving and beautiful". *The Conquered* became recommended reading for Classics students at Oxford and Cambridge, and there was a school edition in 1926. It is a very scarce



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The Conquered

by Naomi Mitchison



With an Introduction by
Ernest Barker

Jonathan Cape

Eleven Gower Street, London

Mitchison's first novel, *The Conquered* (1923), is set during the time of the Roman invasion of Gaul.

volume today, and collectors must be prepared to pay at least £80 for a Very Good copy in the dustjacket.

Mitchison enjoyed similar success with her next two books: *When the Bough Breaks* (1924), a short story collection, and *Cloud Cuckoo Land* (1925), a novel along the lines of its predecessor. By 1926, she had established her own niche as a writer of heroic (but female) 'quest romances', a genre which, until then (with the exception of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *Aurora Leigh*), had been considered male territory.

Her historical novels, however, were never simply adventure stories. Rather, she used the ancient world to mirror contemporary issues, both social and personal. Her books and her life were always "all tangled together", as she used to say.

The Mitchison family had by this time moved to Riverside Court, a large house on

the Thames at Hammersmith Mall. It soon attracted an intellectual and artistic group, described as being "like Bloomsbury, only less excluding", which became a centre of left-wing political and intellectual life in the 1920s and '30s. During this period, she juggled her lives as mother and writer with amazing coolness, as a friend later recalled: "She wrote while pushing Murdoch (her second born) in his perambulator. She wrote with children swarming underfoot . . . she could write balanced in a rowing boat."

Her major work of this period, the 700-page *The Corn King and the Spring Queen*, appeared in 1931. She had been working on the book for several eventful years, a period which she saw the tragic death of her eldest son, Geoff, from spinal meningitis, and the beginning of her involvement with left-wing politics and the campaign for birth control. All these issues were raised in this heroic

novel, which was set in the Hellenic world. Like *The Conquered*, it was no romantic idyll, but focused on such dark matters as sacrifice, abortion and summary punishment.

Again, the book was an enormous success. Critics praised its erudition, its powerful use of the imagination and intellect, its description of ritual and magic, and its accent on simple and natural things. The *New Statesman* reviewer said of Mitchison's work that "to read her is like looking down into deep, warm water, through which the smallest pebble and the most radiant weed shines".

In the 1920s and '30s, Mitchison became increasingly involved in left-wing political and social issues. She published non-fiction works such as *Comments on Birth Control* (Faber & Faber, 1930), *The Home and Changing Civilisation* (The Bodley Head, 1934) and *The Moral Basis of Politics* (Constable, 1938). These issues were also reflected in her fiction titles from this period, such as *We Have Been Warned* — her first novel with a contemporary setting — and *Beyond this Limit* (both 1935).

The latter was illustrated by Wyndham Lewis, who became a friend despite their ethical and political differences. In 1938, when Mitchison was writing *The Blood of the Martyrs*, Lewis painted a portrait of her working on the book, a crucifix on the wall behind her (the novel's theme is the persecution of the early Christians).

REPRESSIVE

Censorship held sway in the late 1920s and early '30s, and Naomi — like fellow novelist, Radclyffe Hall (see BMC 160) — fell foul of the repressive policies of Sir Joynson Hicks ('Jix'). Jonathan Cape began to ask Naomi to "tone down" some of her writing — specifically some of her *Barbarian Stories* (1929) — provoking an outraged reply from the author. When they then objected to certain "suggestive" passages in *We Have Been Warned*, she and Cape parted company. The novel was eventually published by Constable.

Despite her continuing production of books and babies (she now had two daughters and three sons), Naomi travelled



Provincial Booksellers Fairs Association

NOVEMBER BOOK FAIRS

- | | | |
|-------|---|-------------------------------------|
| 1 | *BOLTON,
Last Drop Village, Bromley Cross | 10.00am-4.30pm |
| 2-3 | LONDON,
Hotel Russell, Russell Square WC1 | 1.00pm-7.00pm; 11.00am-7.00pm. Free |
| 2 | TIVERTON,
The Tiverton Hotel | 10.30am-4.00pm |
| 7-8 | GLASGOW,
James Mair Hall, Mitchell Library | Noon-7.00pm; 10.00am-5.00pm |
| 8 | *LINCOLN,
The Assembly Rooms, Bailgate | 10.00am-4.30pm |
| 9 | *DORCHESTER,
Kingston Mauward Agricultural College | 10.30am-4.30pm |
| 9 | BEVERLEY,
The Beverley Arms | 10.00am-4.30pm |
| 14-15 | HAYDOCK PARK,
The Racecourse (Junction 23 M6) | 1.00pm-7.00pm; 10.00am-5.00pm |
| 15 | *HAYWARDS HEATH,
Clair Hall, Perrymount Road | 10.00am-4.00pm |
| 15 | EDINBURGH,
Consort Suite, Roxburghe Hotel | 10.00am-5.00pm |
| 16 | COGGESHALL,
Marks Hall Estate, Essex | 10.00am-4.30pm |

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| 16 | PERFORMING ARTS,
Hotel Russell, Russell Square WC1 (in conjunction with the
Ephemera Society Winter Special Fair - admission £2) | 10.00am-5.00pm |
| 22 | *DARLINGTON,
Arts Centre, Vane Terrace | 10.00am-5.00pm |
| 22 | BRISTOL,
Council House, College Green | 10.00am-4.30pm |
| 22 | NORTHAMPTON,
Moat House, Silver Street | 10.00am-4.00pm |
| 23 | *COTEHELE,
Barn Restaurant, Cotehele House, St. Dominick,
Nr Saltash, Cornwall | 10.30am-4.00pm |
| 25 | LONDON CITY MARKET,
St. Olave's Parish Hall, Mark Lane EC3 | 10.00am-6.00pm. Free |
| 26 | *CAMBRIDGE,
Fisher Hall, Guildhall Place | 10.00am-4.00pm |
| 29 | SHEFFIELD,
Sheffield College, Dyche Lane | 10.00am-4.30pm |
| 30 | OXFORD ACADEMIC,
Linton Lodge Hotel, Linton Road | 11.00am-4.00pm. Free |

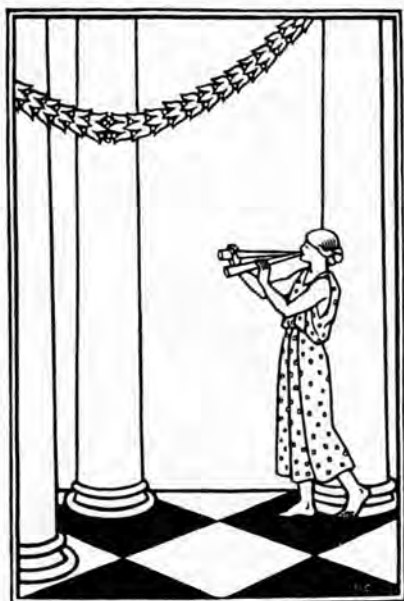
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WHEN THE BOUGH BREAKS

And Other Stories by

NAOMI MITCHISON



Jonathan Cape Ltd, Eleven Gower Street
L O N D O N

Mitchison consolidated her success with her second book, *When the Bough Breaks and Other Stories*.

widely during the 1930s. A trip to the Austrian capital resulted in Naomi Mitchison's *Vienna Diary* (Gollancz, 1934), a vivid and immediate piece of writing. The following year found her in the United States, where she championed the cause of the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union. Just before the outbreak of war, disenchanted with the Communist Left and smarting from several literary disappointments, Naomi uprooted herself and her family to begin a new life in Scotland.

FARMER

The Mitchisons purchased Carradale House, the traditional laird's home, at Carradale on the Mull of Kintyre. There, Naomi began her new career as a cultivator of the land. She has written widely about her life as a farmer, particularly in *Among You Taking Notes* (Gollancz, 1985), where she describes the satisfaction she derived from the sheer physical hard work involved. Sub-titled *The Wartime Diary of Naomi Mitchison, 1939-1945*,

this book was never meant for publication, having been started at the request of the social research organisation, Mass-Observation, as a record of how the people of one representative corner of the country responded to a period of profound social change. The diary was not published until 1985, and fine copies in the jacket can be picked up today for £8-£10.

Naomi's strong romantic streak led her to hope that, in this remote part of Western Scotland, she could put into practice her vision of a "Just Society". She did have *some* degree of success, but many local people were scandalised by her commitment to 'free love' and the fact that she did not attend church. There was also an understandable feeling that she was always an outsider looking in, however close her involvement in local issues.

During the war years, Carradale House became home from home for many evacuees and political exiles. Naomi's most notable work of this period was *The Alban Goes Out*,

a narrative poem describing a Carradale fishing trip, which was published by Raven Press in 1939, with two wood engravings by Gertrude Hermes. This slim volume was issued in blue-and-grey card wrappers, the front cover featuring a black-stamped picture — also by Hermes — of a cormorant diving for a fish. This rare book now sells for up to £50 in Very Good condition.

Mitchison's reclamation of her Highland heritage (the Haldanes originally came from Perthshire) resulted in another fine novel. *The Bull Calves*, written during the war but not published until 1947, is a fascinating account of her Haldane ancestors caught in the aftermath of the '45 Rebellion. The first edition has a frontispiece sketch by Louise Annand of the two protagonists, Kirstie and Black William, who are very obvious depictions of Naomi and her close friend, Dennis MacIntosh, a Carradale fisherman who collaborated with her on *Men and Herring: A Documentary* (1949) and the play, *Spindrift* (1951).

The Bull Calves was not very well received by London reviewers, who found its Gaelic speech rhythms difficult and unappealing. However, it was praised in Scotland and is now considered to be one of her best pieces of work. Virago Modern Classics have recently reissued the novel to coincide with her centenary, and have also published a new biography by Jenni Calder entitled *The Nine Lives of Naomi Mitchison* (1997).

CHILDREN

The title of the new biography is appropriate, as Naomi Mitchison has indeed led many lives. One important strand in her literary career has been her work as a writer for children (although it is sometimes difficult to classify her books in this way, as their appeal is so wide). In 1928, she published *Nix-Nought-Nothing*, a volume of plays for young audiences, but this facet of her talents reached its full blossoming in the 1950s, when she wrote a number of children's books (many with Scottish settings), beginning with *The Big House* in 1950. She has collaborated with such eminent illustrators as Pauline Baynes (*Graeme and the Dragon*, 1954) and Edward

THE POWERS OF LIGHT

NAOMI
MITCHISON

ILLUSTRATIONS BY
ERIC KENNINGTON



PHAROS

THIRTY BEDFORD SQUARE LONDON

Mitchison's short story, *The Powers of Light*, now sells for up to £40 in Very Good condition.

Ardiszone (*The Rib of the Green Umbrella*, 1960), and these books would form a very attractive collection in themselves.

In the children's novel, *Travel Light* (1952), set in a mythological Nordic past, the heroine, Halla, has to learn to travel unencumbered as part of her quest: "No-one can travel light with a house on their back," she is told, "not even a snail." These words reflected Mitchison's own wanderlust, which had not diminished as she entered middle-age. She visited Pakistan, where her daughter, Lois, worked. From there she went north, thumbing rides and sleeping rough. She also visited the U.S.A. and the Soviet Union.

Not content with the terrestrial, Naomi set her next novel in outer space. With *Memoirs of a Spacewoman* (1962), she again broke new ground, paving the way for the later, 'science fiction' works of Doris Lessing and Ursula le Guin. A classic of its kind, *Memoirs of a Spacewoman* was the ideal vehicle for Naomi Mitchison's preoccupations with quest narratives and scientific experimenta-



The Powers of Light contains several colourful plates by the collectable artist, Eric Kennington.

tion. *Solution Three* (Dobson, 1973) continued the theme, while *Not By Bread Alone* (1983), which is concerned with genetic engineering, has a distinctly contemporary resonance.

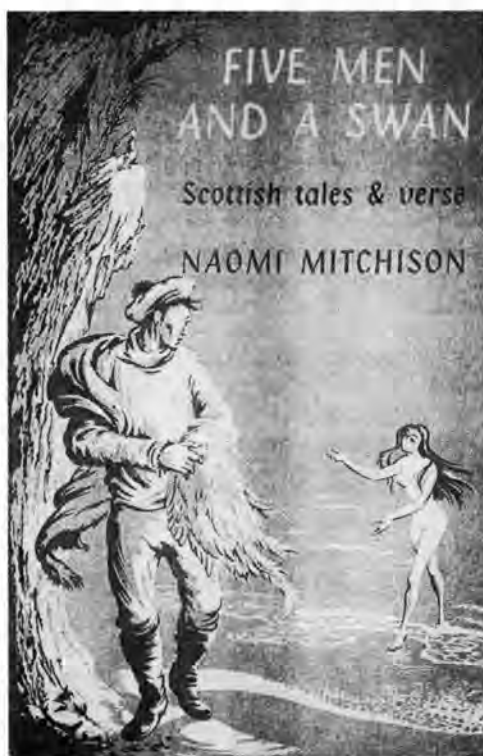
In the main, however, it was not future technology in itself that interested Naomi in these challenging books. Rather, it was the possibility of a different, more egalitarian kind of relationship between women and men. The tension in her writing is always between the urge of women to "follow nature" and the drive to take control of their own lives.

"The problems facing a writer of science fiction," she has said, "are somewhat the same as those of a writer of historical fiction or of stories about people in another culture with another language." When she wrote these words, Naomi was already immersed in another culture. She was now 65 years old and an unusually accomplished woman, yet it did not cross her mind to rest on her laurels. She was about to start on a fresh phase of

existence that would involve her in the emergence of Botswana as an independent African nation.

She had met Linchwe, designated chief of an African tribe in what was then Bechuanaland, back in the 1950s when he had been a guest at Carradale. Returning to his country in 1962, Linchwe invited Naomi to attend his installation as tribe leader. In her usual style, Naomi travelled solo to Southern Africa, arriving at her destination in the middle of the night. She knew at once that she had found a new home.

Linchwe eventually made her his "adopted mother and tribal adviser". In *Return to the Fairy Hill* (1966), Naomi describes her delight with Mochudi and its culture: "I could have stayed forever; I knew that for a time I was utterly happy, in all my senses." Perhaps "for a time" is the key phrase here. At first she



Mitchison is fiercely proud of her Scottish roots, and has written many books about her native land.

conceived the idea that here, at last, she really would help to found the "Just Society" of her dreams. However, as had been her experience on the west coast of Scotland, she was to discover that her efforts were sometimes misinterpreted. Again, it is easy to understand why: all through her life she was to find that her economic and social class (she was now Lady Mitchison) sat uneasily alongside her idealistic brand of socialism. However, she travelled back and forth to Botswana for the next thirty or so years, working on various social projects, declaring that she could happily have died there: "I cling like an old lizard to the rocks of Mochudi," she wrote in an unpublished poem.

Her bond with the country and its people has never been broken, and it provided her with a fresh surge of creativity. *When We Become Men* (1965) is a novel about the Bakgatla tribe, to which Linchwe belonged. Naomi read it aloud to Linchwe as it was being written. Her African books for children are especially authentic and fresh, notably *Ketze and the Chief* (1965) and *The Family at Ditlabeng* (1969). The latter has become a part of the school syllabus in Botswana.

BANNED

African Heroes (1968), a collection of short stories for children, was banned in neighbouring South Africa (it makes reference to Nelson Mandela), as was *A Life for Africa: The Story of Bram Fischer* (1973). Indeed, Naomi herself was barred from the country for a time, which she rightly interpreted as a tribute to her effectiveness as an anti-apartheid campaigner.

Dick Mitchison, who had become a respected Labour MP and life peer, died in 1970, leaving his wife distraught. Although they had at that time been living virtually separate existences, Naomi nevertheless felt that her life had lost its central pivot. From now on she spent winters in London and summers in Carradale, still making regular trips to Botswana. A hip replacement did little to slow her down, and she later travelled

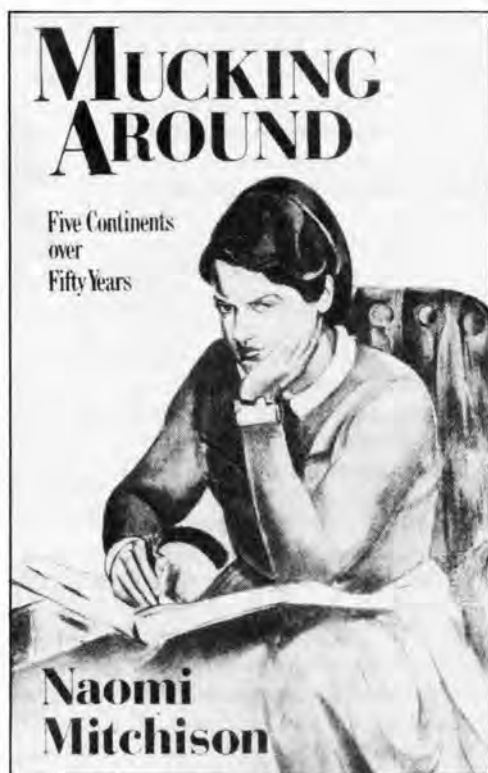
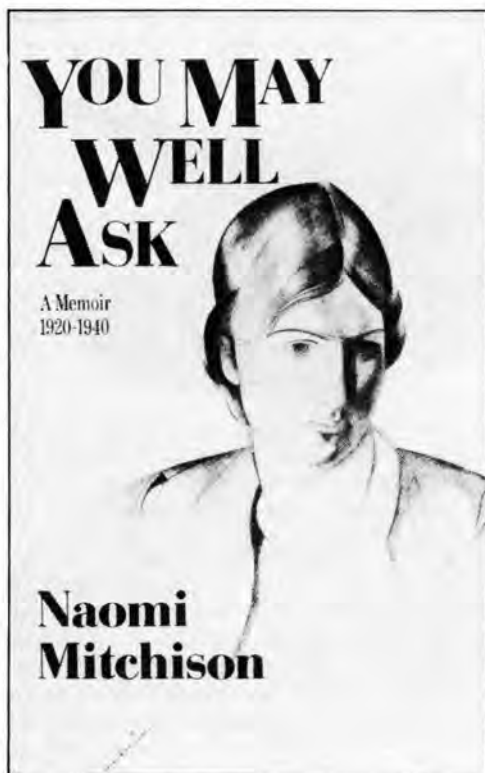


One of two engravings by Gertrude Hermes which accompanied Mitchison's poem, *The Alban Goes Out*. It now fetches up to £50.

to the Caribbean, Australia and California. Some of these journeys are recounted in *Mucking Around: Five Continents over Fifty Years* (Gollancz, 1981).

Typically, one of her few regrets about her advancing years is that she is "too old for a love affair!" Although she has never stopped writing, she found in the 1960s that she was increasingly being rejected by publishers. "I am madly out of fashion," she wrote to a friend. In the late 1970s, however, she was taken up by three small, Scottish firms: Canongate, Richard Drew and Balnain Books. In 1987, Drew published *Early in Orkadia*, a novel about neolithic life on Orkney, and her most recent works of fiction — *Sea-Green Ribbons* and *The Oath-Takers* — were both brought out by Balnain in 1991, when she was 94 years old.

**Next issue
on sale
21 Nov**



Mitchison has written several volumes of memoirs. These two feature cover drawings by Wyndham Lewis.

Naomi Mitchison's first books were greeted with great acclaim, and for a decade or so she was regarded as a prominent writer, but sadly her reputation had already begun to decline by the end of the '30s. This may have been partly due to her uncompromising political views, but there is no doubt that she had also — in her own words — just gone "out of fashion".

She seems to be due for a revival, and certainly the signs are good — several of her early works were reissued during the 1980s (*The Corn King and the Spring Queen*, *Travel Light*, *Memoirs of a Spacewoman*, *The Bull Calves* and *Blood of the Martyrs*), and now *The Bull Calves* is available in a new paperback edition.

Her sheer output is impressive. She has produced over eighty books and has edited and contributed to many more, as well as

writing extensively for newspapers and magazines. Some of her children's novels and plays are just as appealing to adult readers, and vice versa. Many of her works are beautifully illustrated in colour — for instance, the short story, *The Powers of Light* (Pharos, 1932), features stunning illustrations by Eric Kennington.

DIFFICULT

The children's books or science fiction works alone would make a good collection, or perhaps her works set in Scotland or Africa — but Naomi Mitchison is a very difficult writer to categorise, and perhaps no such attempt should be made. Above all, she is a born storyteller. Indeed, her biographer, Jenni Calder, believes that she was "addicted to creating narratives, including many narratives of her own life".

Jenni Calder's new book, *The Nine Lives of Naomi Mitchison* (Virago, 1997), and Jill Benton's *Naomi Mitchison: A Biography* (Pandora, 1990), are required reading for anyone curious to know more about this remarkable woman as she approaches her 100th birthday. I am indebted to both works for assisting me in the writing of this feature,

and for enhancing my knowledge of a fascinating and underrated writer.

We would like to thank Fortune Green Books, The London Antiquarian Book Arcade and Nigel Williams Rare Books for providing several of the illustrations which accompany this feature.

NAOMI MITCHISON UK BIBLIOGRAPHY

A guide to current values of books in Very Good (pre-1970) to Fine condition without/with dustjackets.

NOVELS

THE CONQUERED (Cape, 1923)	£30-£50 (£75-£100)
CLOUD CUCKOO LAND (Cape, 1925)	£10-£15 (£20-£30)
THE CORN KING AND THE SPRING QUEEN (illustrated by Z. Stryjenska) (Cape, 1931)	£10-£15 (£20-£30)
WE HAVE BEEN WARNED (Constable, 1935)	£10-£15 (£20-£30)
BEYOND THIS LIMIT (illustrated by Wyndham Lewis) (Cape, 1935)	£15-£20 (£30-£40)
THE BLOOD OF THE MARTYRS (Constable, 1939)	£8-£10 (£15-£20)
THE BULL CALVES (illustrated by Louise Annand) (Cape, 1947)	£10-£15 (£20-£30)
LOBSTERS ON THE AGENDA (Gollancz, 1952)	£6-£8 (£10-£15)
BEHOLD YOUR KING (Muller, 1957)	£6-£8 (£10-£15)
MEMOIRS OF A SPACEWOMAN (Gollancz, 1962)	£8-£10 (£20-£25)
WHEN WE BECOME MEN (Collins, 1965)	£6-£8 (£10-£15)
CLEOPATRA'S PEOPLE (Heinemann, 1972)	£3-£5 (£8-£10)
SOLUTION THREE (Dobson, 1973)	£8-£10 (£20-£25)
NOT BY BREAD ALONE (Marion Boyars, 1983)	£6-£8 (£10-£15)
EARLY IN ORCADIA (R. Drew, 1987)	£3-£5 (£8-£10)
THE OATH TAKERS (Bain Books, 1991)	£3-£5 (£8-£10)
SEA-GREEN RIBBONS (Bain Books, 1991)	£3-£5 (£8-£10)

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BEYOND THIS LIMIT: Selected Shorter Fiction (Scottish Academic Press, 1986)	£3-£5 (£8-£10)

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THE DELICATE FIRE (Cape, 1933)	£10-£15 (£20-£30)
THE FOURTH PIG (Constable, 1936)	£6-£8 (£10-£15)
FIVE MEN AND A SWAN (Allen & Unwin, 1957)	£6-£8 (£10-£15)
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THE LABURNUM BRANCH (Cape, 1926)	£10-£15 (£20-£30)
THE ALBAN GOES OUT (with wood engravings by Gertrude Hermes; card wrappers) (Raven Press, 1939)	£40-£50
THE CLEANSING OF THE KNIFE and Other Poems (Canongate, 1978)	£3-£5 (£8-£10)

PLAYS

THE PRICE OF FREEDOM (with Lewis Gielgud) (Cape, 1931)	£8-£10 (£20-£30)
AS IT WAS IN THE BEGINNING (with Lewis Gielgud) (Cape, 1939)	£3-£5 (£8-£10)
SPINDRIFT (with Dennis MacIntosh; wrappers) (French, 1951)	£6-£8

CHILDREN'S

NIX-NOUGHT-NOTHING (plays) (Cape, 1928)	£8-£10 (£15-£20)
THE HOSTAGES AND OTHER STORIES (Cape, 1930)	£8-£10 (£15-£20)
BOYS AND GIRLS AND GODS (Watts, 1931)	£8-£10 (£15-£20)
KATE CRACKERNUTS (Aldan Press, 1931)	£8-£10 (£15-£20)
AN OUTLINE FOR BOYS AND GIRLS AND THEIR PARENTS. Edited by Naomi Mitchison (Gollancz, 1932)	£3-£5 (£8-£10)
AN END AND A BEGINNING and Other Plays (Constable, 1937)	£6-£8 (£10-£15)
ditto (as 'Historical Plays for Schools'; two volumes) (Constable, 1939)	the set £6-£8 (£10-£15)

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NIX-NOUGHT-NOTHING and ELFIN HILL (plays) (Cape, 1948)	£6-£8 (£10-£15)
THE BIG HOUSE (Faber, 1950)	£6-£8 (£10-£15)
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NON-FICTION	
ANNA COMMENA (Gerald Howe: 'Representative Women's Series', 1928)	£3-£5 (£8-£10)
COMMENTS ON BIRTH CONTROL (Faber: 'Criterion Miscellany' series No 12, 1930)	£3-£5 (£8-£10)
NAOMI MITCHISON'S VIENNA DIARY (Gollancz, 1934)	£8-£10 (£15-£20)
THE HOME AND CHANGING CIVILISATION (The Bodley Head, 1934)	£8-£10 (£15-£20)
SOCRATES (with Richard Crossman) (Hogarth Press, 1937)	£8-£10 (£15-£20)
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Edited by Dorothy Sheridan (Gollancz, 1985)	£3-£5 (£8-£10)
SALTIRE SELF-PORTRAITS (wrappers) (Saltire Society, 1986)	£3-£5 (£8-£10)
ESSENTIAL READING	
Benton, Jill: NAOMI MITCHISON: A BIOGRAPHY (Pandora, 1990)	£3-£5 (£8-£10)
Calder, Jenni: THE NINE LIVES OF NAOMI MITCHISON (Virago, 1997)	In print £20



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Hatfield BR station opposite main gate.

SUNDAY 26 OCTOBER – 10.00am – 4.30pm

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YORK

York Racecourse, signposted off A64, York.
(Highlighted on all major road maps.)

SUNDAY 26 OCTOBER – 10.00am – 4.30pm

Free parking. Refreshments.

BLOOMSBURY – LONDON

Royal National Hotel, Woburn Place, London WC1.

(143 exhibitors, the widest choice of books for miles.)

SUNDAY 2 NOVEMBER – 10.00am – 5.30pm

Free admission. Refreshments.
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STOCKPORT – CHESHIRE

Town Hall, Edward Street, Stockport, Cheshire.

SUNDAY 2 NOVEMBER – 11.00am – 4.30pm

Refreshments. A busy venue, worth a visit.

SYON PARK – MIDDLESEX

Syon Park, Conference Centre, Park Road, Brentford,
Middlesex. (Syon Park/House signposted
approaching Brentford and Isleworth.)

SUNDAY 9 NOVEMBER – 10.00am – 4.30pm

Refreshments. Free parking.
Attractive setting for a lively book fair.

HERTFORD – HERTS.

Castle Hall, St. Andrew Street, Hertford, Herts.

SUNDAY 16 NOVEMBER – 10.00am – 4.30pm
Refreshments.

LONGLEAT – WILTSHIRE

Longleat House, signposted on A362, Warminster,
Wiltshire.

SUNDAY 16 NOVEMBER – 10.00am – 4.30pm

Free parking. Refreshments.
Very popular fair with a good mix of books.

ASCOT – BERKSHIRE

Ascot Racecourse, High Street (A329), Ascot,
Berkshire.

SUNDAY 16 NOVEMBER – 10.00am – 4.00pm

Free parking. Refreshments.
(Within walking distance Ascot BR station.)

HARROGATE

This fair for 16 November has been cancelled.

KEMPTON PARK – MIDDLESEX

Kempton Park Racecourse, Staines Road East (A308),
Sunbury-on-Thames, Middx.

SUNDAY 23 NOVEMBER – 10.00am – 4.00pm

Free parking. Refreshments.
(Busy, well-attended fair.)

CHELTENHAM – GLOUCESTERSHIRE

Cheltenham Racecourse, Prestbury, Cheltenham,
Glos. (Racecourse signposted and highlighted on all
major road maps.)

SUNDAY 23 NOVEMBER – 10.00am – 4.30pm

Free parking. Refreshments.

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Oscar Wilde at the very height of his fame. His reputation has grown steadily since his death in 1900.

OSCAR WILDE

A SURVEY OF HIS MOST COLLECTABLE WORKS

BY JOHN D. STRATFORD

It seems that Oscar Wilde is never out of the public eye for long. In May, the literary world marked the centenary of his release from prison with a spate of newspaper articles and tributes, and the premiere of a major new film about his life, starring Stephen Fry, has recently been screened. As we draw towards the centenary of Wilde's death, interest continues to grow in the life and works of this fascinating man, who was one of the greatest personalities the world of literature has ever produced.

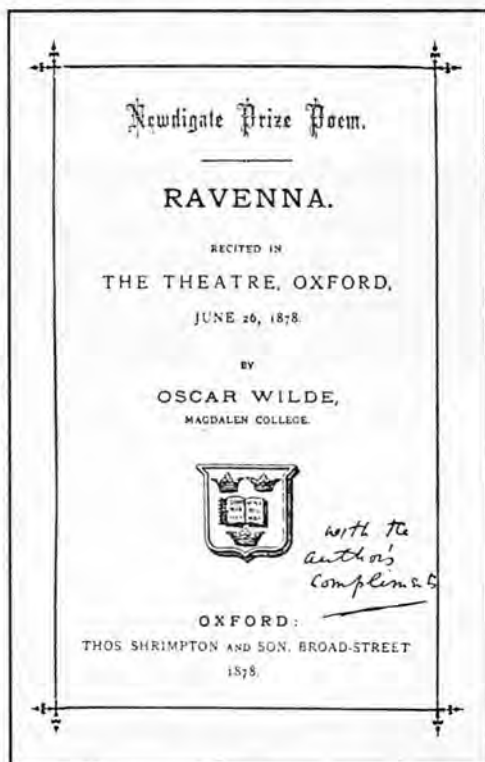
However, his popular image is still, to some extent, a distorted one. Wilde is remembered by many as merely the most notorious figure of the 'Naughty Nineties', a larger-than-life character who wandered around shooting off epigrams and maxims. The fact that he was gay only adds to his apparent exoticism. One important feature tends to be missing from this simplified portrait — the fact that he also happened to be a literary genius.

LIMITED EDITIONS

It is not my intention to describe Wilde's life, which has been the subject of over a hundred biographies, some of which are considered in my article in BMC 135. Rather, I want to concentrate upon his published works. Wilde loved books (especially limited editions) so passionately that his friend, Ada Leverson, suggested that he should publish a volume that was all margins full of beautiful unwritten thoughts. This should be bound in some Nile-green skin powdered with gilt nenuphars and smoothed with hard ivory, decorated with gold and printed on Japanese paper. He agreed, stipulating that

there should be 500 signed copies for close friends, six for the general public — and one for America. This quip succinctly and wittily summed up his attitude towards the publication of his own works, as shall be revealed.

Born in Dublin on 16th October 1854, the budding genius was christened Oscar Fingall O'Flahertie Wills Wilde by his proud parents,



Ravenna (1878) was Wilde's first published work. A copy fetched \$1,035 in New York last October.

Lady and Sir William Wilde. He was their second son and, although disappointed that he was not a girl, they did all they could to encourage his unique gifts. In 1874, as a student at Trinity College, Dublin, he won the Berkeley Gold Medal for Greek (an extremely practical award which often found its way into the hands of pawnbrokers in times of trouble), and then secured an even more useful trophy: a scholarship to Oxford.

APPLAUDED

It was here that Wilde produced his first published work, the prize-winning poem, *Ravenna*, which he recited in the Oxford Theatre on 26th June 1878. According to the proud author, the poem "was listened to with rapt attention and frequently applauded". It was published, in an edition of 168 copies, by Thomas Shrimpton & Son as a pamphlet, in grey wrappers printed in black. Like all Wilde first editions, this is now very sought after, a copy selling for \$1,035 (around £700) at Sotheby's New York last October.

It is here too that collectors encounter the first of the numerous Wilde pirate editions produced in 1904 by the infamous A. Cooper of Charing Cross Road and published under the imprint 'Wright & Jones'. (Cooper was eventually put out of business by Robert Ross, Wilde's literary executor, and fled to Brighton.) In this case, the pirate edition is nearly as rare and expensive as the authentic pamphlet, and can easily be distinguished from the latter, which — unlike the forgery — features the arms of Oxford University on its front cover.

Ravenna marked the start of a truly remarkable publishing career. Wilde left Oxford with a double first and headed towards London to become "if not famous then infamous", as he commented to one of his close friends. He was soon extremely well known in London, establishing himself as a central figure in the burgeoning Aesthetic Movement. Within a few months, he was rubbing shoulders with the most famous people of the day, including Lillie Langtry, Ellen Terry, Sarah Bernhardt and, later, the Prince of Wales.

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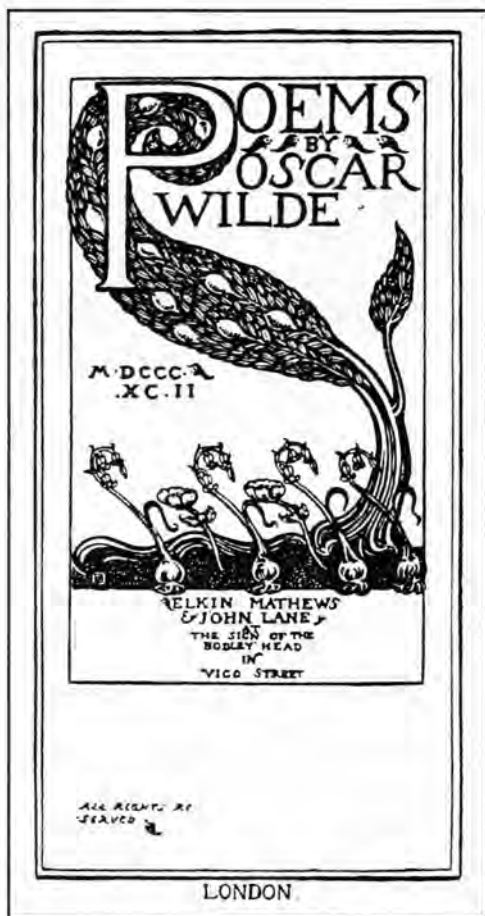
In 1880, he paid for a privately-printed edition of his first, unsuccessful play, *Vera*. Unfortunately this book poses a real problem to the collector as it is believed that only four copies were printed. Although this slim work was originally issued in grey wrappers, Wilde had one copy bound in dark red leather with gilt lettering, and presented it to Ellen Terry. Another elaborately-bound copy went to an American actress, Genevieve Ward. Wilde had hoped that one of these women would act in his play. The second edition, also in grey wrappers with black lettering, was printed during Wilde's successful lecture tour of America, once again with the purpose of attracting possible producers and/or actors. It is believed that this edition was restricted to a mere twenty copies, of which only six are known to exist today. Publication was arranged by the tour manager, Richard D'Oyly Carte, and the work carries no printer's or publisher's name.

INCREDIBLE

During the disgraceful sale of Wilde's belongings which followed his arrest in 1895, eight copies were sold as a lot, and a few more have turned up over the years. Most recently, a copy was offered for sale by Gekoski in the summer of 1994 for an incredible £10,000. Collectors have little chance of obtaining this book and will have to satisfy themselves with either pirate editions (at around £150) or the 1908 volume in which it is collected with *Salome* and *A Florentine Tragedy*. *Vera* had a short run in America in 1883, but has seldom been performed since.

Wilde always thought of himself first and foremost as a poet, and it is therefore appropriate that his first substantial book should have been the 1881 collection, *Poems*. This 236-page volume was published by David Bogue in crown octavo format, with white parchment covers featuring a design in gilt of a prunus blossom, and top edge gilt. Wilde was obliged to pay the cost of the printing himself. The book sold for 10/6, but Very Good copies of the first edition now fetch as much as £800, and considerably more if signed.

On the subject of inscriptions, I must offer a word of caution to collectors. Wilde's



Charles Ricketts' title-page for the 1892 edition of Wilde's *Poems*. Only 220 signed copies were issued.

signature is so well known and so often reproduced in facsimile that any inscribed edition that was not originally issued as signed must be treated with extreme suspicion unless the provenance is proved beyond doubt. Forgery has been going on ever since Wilde's death, and even London auction houses have been fooled in the past.

Poems ran to three editions in its year of publication — the second edition can be distinguished by the fact that the blossoms on the cover are larger than those on the first — followed by two more in 1882. In May 1892, Messrs Elkin Mathews and John Lane brought 220 sets of sheets from the Brogue edition and

This Number Contains a Complete Novel.

THE PICTURE OF DORIAN GRAY.

By OSCAR WILDE.



MONTHLY MAGAZINE.

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THE PICTURE OF DORIAN GRAY

B. Y.
OSCAR WILDE



WARD, LOCK & CO.
LONDON & NEW YORK
& MELBOURNE.

Wilde courted controversy with his only novel, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. It was initially published in *Lippincott's Magazine* (left), before being issued in trade (right) and De Luxe editions by Ward Lock in 1891.

issued them with a new decorated title-page by Charles Ricketts. This edition, which was numbered and signed by Wilde, featured pale violet cloth boards gilt and decorated end-papers, again by Ricketts. This edition is extremely sought-after by collectors, a copy selling for £1,400 at Sotheby's last December.

PROBLEMATICAL

Wilde's (not very successful) second play, *The Duchess of Padua*, is once again extremely problematical for collectors as only twenty copies were produced and, as long ago as 1914, Wilde's bibliographer claimed that only four copies were still known to exist. The play, which was written for the American actress, Mary Anderson, was sub-titled "A Tragedy of the XVI Century . . . written in Paris in the XX Century". It was privately printed "as manuscript" and issued in grey-green wrappers without any lettering. The play was eventually produced in 1891, even though Wilde had received money for it (which he

spent in Paris) as early as 1883. Due to the rarity of this book, the pirates once again moved in to fill a gap in the market. The play did not become generally available until 1908, when it was included in Volume One of the 'Collected Works'.

On 29th May 1884, Wilde married Constance Lloyd. They were to have two sons — the eldest, Cyril, died in the First World War, but the youngest, Vyvyan, lived until 1967 and is partly responsible for maintaining Wilde's reputation over the years, notably with his autobiography, *Son of Oscar Wilde*, published in 1954.

Wilde worked as a journalist for a number of years and then, in 1888, published his first collection of fairy stories, *The Happy Prince and Other Tales*. The book contained five stories, including his most famous, 'The Selfish Giant', and immediately assured its author a place alongside Hans Christian Andersen and the Brothers Grimm as a writer of fantastic tales for children. The book was

published in May 1888 by David Nutt and featured illustrations by Walter Crane and Jacob Hood. The trade edition cost five shillings and was issued in stout bevelled boards covered with Japanese vellum. There was also a De Luxe edition, printed on hand-made paper with titles in red letters. This was limited to 75 copies, signed by both Wilde and the publisher. A copy sold for £2,800 at Sotheby's in December.

Wilde's fairy tales are adored by children but, as with all his writings, they have a hidden sub-text which also makes them a delight to adults. As a result they remained in print during the 'wilderness years' (1895-1908) following his trial, when most of his works remained firmly off the bookshelves.

Wilde's next book, his only novel, proved to be his most controversial work, and has become a classic of world literature. *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is the story of a beautiful young man who, through a diabolical pact, is able to retain his youth, while his portrait bears the marks of all the sins he commits. The story originally appeared in *Lippincott's Magazine* in 1890, and was published (with six additional chapters) in book-form by Ward Lock in April 1891.

RUMOURS

It was claimed at Wilde's trials that the book had originally been more explicitly homosexual in tone, but that the author had subsequently watered down the more controversial passages — an accusation which, not surprisingly, he denied. However, on its first publication, the novel confirmed to many that the dark rumours surrounding Wilde's private life — about his misadventures in the Victorian sexual underworld — were true. A storm of protest followed its publication, and numerous letters appeared in the press. Wilde defended his book, but it marked a turning point in his life, one that eventually led to disgrace, prison and exile. (Christopher Millard issued two books — in 1907 and 1912 — describing the row over the novel and the subsequent newspaper correspondence.)

The first edition of *Dorian Gray* was bound in grey, parchment-backed bevelled boards, lettered in gilt and with ten gilt butterflies

designed by Ricketts on the front cover. It was issued in a buff-coloured dustjacket, featuring the same butterfly design, as well as the title and the author's name. A jacketless copy sold at the Sotheby's sale for £620.

As well as the trade edition, Ward Lock also issued a De Luxe edition, limited to 250 signed and numbered copies on Van Gelder's hand-made paper. These seldom appear for sale, and can fetch up to £3,000 when they do. Again there are pirate editions from around 1904, and you must be careful to check the details of any so-called first editions before parting with any money.

COPYRIGHT

When Wilde went bankrupt in 1896, the copyright of *Dorian Gray* was purchased by Charles Carrington, a Parisian bookseller. Carrington issued several editions of the novel from the French capital, and these found their way into Britain during the years in which Wilde's works were blacklisted. These included the first illustrated edition, which was published in 1910, although dated '1908'. It featured seven wood-engravings by Eugène Dété from drawings by Paul Thiriat. In 1913, a play in three acts and a prologue — ponderously entitled *The Picture of Dorian Gray from the Romance of Oscar Wilde* — was published to coincide with a stage production at London's Vaudeville Theatre. *Dorian Gray* is Wilde's bestselling work and has inspired countless plays, films, articles, books and academic studies.

Soon after the publication of his novel, Wilde met a man whom he later came to regard, rather unfairly, as the very person-

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ification of Dorian Gray: the poet Lord Alfred Douglas, better known as 'Bosie' (see BMC 133). Their passionate love affair and subsequent scandalous behaviour with male prostitutes led to Wilde's downfall, but not before he had published several more works.

In terms of book publication, 1891 was Wilde's most productive year. May saw the appearance of *Intentions*, a collection of essays which had previously appeared in various magazines. The publishers this time were James R. Osgood, and the book was issued in moss-green cloth boards, once again with gilt designs by Charles Ricketts. The initial print-run was 1,500 copies.

READABLE

Intentions is less sought-after than Wilde's other books, and is therefore more reasonably priced (£100-£150 in Very Good condition). This is a shame because these essays contain some of his finest prose and are still extremely readable today. They have delightful titles such as 'The Critic as Artist, with some remarks upon the importance of doing nothing', 'The Truth of Masks' and 'The Decay of Lying'. Wilde used the names of his sons in a dialogue in one essay — as Vyvyan Holland discovered to his surprise when he eventually read the book whilst an undergraduate at Cambridge University.

The third book to appear in 1891 was a collection of short stories entitled *Lord Arthur Savile's Crime and Other Stories*. Published by James R. Osgood in July of that year, this volume was issued in salmon-pink boards featuring a design by Charles Ricketts printed, like the lettering, in red. The initial print-run

was 2,000 copies and so the book is not nearly as rare as many of Wilde's works, although the covers are prone to soiling, which means that it is hard to find examples in Very Good condition. When they do turn up, they sell for £200-£250. This volume contains another Wilde classic, 'The Canterville Ghost', which makes fun of the Americans and is therefore still popular with the English today.

The final book of this year appeared in November. Entitled *The House of Pomegranates*, this was another volume of fairy tales, although they were far more 'adult' and sophisticated than those in *The Happy Prince*. The collection was again published by James R. Osgood, and was decorated by Ricketts, with four full-page illustrations by his partner, Charles Shannon. Millard informs us in his bibliography (published under the pseudonym, 'Stuart Mason') that: "These four plates were printed in Paris by some 'improved' process. After the book was finished and bound it was noticed that a dusty deposit had formed on each plate, probably owing to some chemical impurity. To take off this deposit each plate was rubbed with soft flannel, which removed the surface and left the reproduction faint and in some cases almost obliterated." The book cost 21s and was issued in cream-coloured linen boards with a moss-green linen spine. The upper cover was printed in light red and stamped with gilt designs of a peacock, a running fountain and a basket of split pomegranates. The book was issued in a decorated paper dustjacket, and was sold in a box.

DELICATE

When a journalist criticised the volume's design, Wilde replied: "The artistic beauty of the cover of my book resides in the delicate tracing, arabesques, and massing of many coral-red lines on a ground of white ivory, the colour-effect culminating in certain high gilt notes, and being made still more pleasurable by the overlapping of moss-green cloth that holds the book together." He was also told that the book was not suitable for children, to which he replied: "I had about as much intention of pleasing the British child as I had of pleasing the British public." Remarks like

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Stephen Fry takes the title-part in *Wilde*, the latest film to chronicle the rise and fall of the great writer.

these did little to endear him to the general populace, who would turn on him only a few years later.

The House of Pomegranates is vastly underrated and contains one of Wilde's finest and most moving stories, 'The Birthday of the Infanta'. Millard tells us that the book was not a success and that it was remaindered in 1903 or 1904, with the stock sold off for a few shillings. It is certainly very hard to find Very Good copies, even harder to find them in dustjackets — and next to impossible to unearth an example in its original box.

Another two years were to pass before Wilde published his next book. He was by now a famous playwright thanks to the success of *Lady Windermere's Fan* in 1892, but he was also "feasting with panthers", to use his own expression. He began to be seen with 'unsuitable' companions — rough young men, and upper-class dandies wearing vine leaves in their hair. The dark rumours which had begun to circulate a few years before now became openly discussed.

It was against this background that Wilde produced his most extravagant work: the one-act play, *Salome*. Once again, its publication aroused controversy and prompted letters to the press. The play was based loosely upon the biblical story of Salome and John the Baptist. Wilde wrote it in French, supposedly because he "wanted once to touch this new instrument [i.e. the French language] to see whether I could make any beautiful thing out of it", but more likely because he wanted Sarah Bernhardt to play the heroine — plus the fact that French was the unofficial language of Decadence.

BANNED

The play was actually in rehearsal in London with Sarah Bernhardt in the lead role when the Lord Chancellor banned it on the authority of an old law forbidding the depiction of Biblical characters on the British stage. Wilde was incensed and threatened to "leave England to settle in France where I shall take out letters of naturalisation". He was ridiculed in the press as a result.



This illustration from *'The Canterville Ghost'* accompanied its first appearance in *The Court and Society Review* in early 1887.

The work was first issued in Paris on 22nd February 1893, in purple wrappers with silver lettering. (The "Tyrian purple" was chosen by Wilde to complement Lord Alfred Douglas's gold hair.) There were 600 'standard' copies, plus another fifty printed on Van Gelder hand-made paper (but otherwise identical to the ordinary issue). These now sell for £1,000-£1,500 and £2,000-£2,500 respectively.

TRANSLATION

An English edition was published by Elkin Mathews and John Lane early in 1894, to a translation by Lord Alfred Douglas. This caused bad feeling between Wilde and Douglas, who did not have sufficient knowledge of French to complete the task to the author's demanding standards (Oscar later fell out with the French translator of *The Ballad of Reading Gaol*). Furthermore, Wilde did not like the illustrations by Aubrey Beardsley

(see BMC 148 & 149), which were completely unrelated to the text. In the event, some of them had to be removed as they were judged to be obscene.

The book finally appeared on 9th February 1894, dedicated "To my friend Lord Alfred Douglas the translator of my Play". It was bound in pale blue canvas boards, with gilt blocked lettering (designed by Beardsley) on the spine and front cover. The plates were printed on glazed paper, and the frontispiece was protected by a tissue guard-paper. This book is now much sought-after, being of interest to both Wilde and Beardsley collectors. A bound copy ("green half morocco, partly faded, original wrappers preserved") recently sold at Bloomsbury Book Auctions for £550, but a dealer might ask twice that amount.

John Lane also issued a De Luxe edition of 100 copies, beautifully bound in green silk boards with gilt lettering, the illustrations printed on Japanese vellum. This book was originally priced at thirty shillings, but now sells for many thousands of pounds. In September 1906, the same company issued a new edition containing more of Beardsley's illustrations. One of the few events to cheer Wilde during his terrible time in prison was the news that *Salome* had finally been performed by Sarah Bernhardt in Paris during 1896.

Wilde had established himself as a playwright with *Lady Windermere's Fan*, and the play was finally published by John Lane on 9th November 1893. The book was bound in light brown/red linen boards, with gilt lettering and cover designs by Charles Shannon. There was a trade edition of 500 copies, plus a further fifty copies on hand-made paper in yellow buckram boards. One of these, in a sumptuous morocco binding by Hatchards, sold for £1,955 at Sotheby's on 17th July.

The following year, 1894, Mathews and Lane published the final version of *The Sphinx*, a long poem which Wilde had been working on since his time at Oxford. (He had once remarked that he "hesitated to publish *The Sphinx* as it would destroy domesticity in England".) This is one of the most beautifully produced and collectable of Wilde's books, being issued in full vellum boards with elaborate designs in gilt, and with more strange illustrations by Ricketts. It is printed throughout in three colours — red, black and green — with twelve fancy initial capital letters. A mere 200 copies were printed.

LIMITED

A large paper edition was also published, limited to 25 copies and priced at a hefty five guineas. A 'standard' copy fetched \$2,300 (around £1,500) at Sotheby's New York last October, while the De Luxe edition can sell for up to £4,000 in Very Good condition.

A critic wrote of Ricketts' contribution that "the monsters of the Egyptian room at the British Museum live again in his weird, sometimes repulsive . . . symbolic designs", while another said of the poem that it "is amongst the most remarkable works ever penned by human hand" — perhaps something of an overstatement. *The Sphinx* is considered to be Ricketts' finest achievement, and his illustrations are certainly more in harmony with Wilde's text than those Beardsley provided for *Salome*.

Wilde's next book was the text of his latest successful play, *A Woman of No Importance*, which was published by John Lane on 9th October 1894. The binding was uniform with *Lady Windermere's Fan* — light brown/red linen boards, with gilt lettering and designs by Shannon matching those on the earlier book. The print-run was 500 copies, and there were a further fifty copies on hand-made paper in yellow buckram boards.

In the fateful year of 1895, Arthur L. Humphreys printed — on behalf of the author — a pamphlet containing Wilde's essay, *The Soul of Man*, better-known as *The Soul of Man under Socialism*. This piece, one of the greatest essays ever written, had originally been published in *The Fortnightly*



A House of Pomegranates featured another Ricketts title-page and plates by his partner, Charles Shannon.

Review back in February 1891, and reflected both Wilde's aesthetic beliefs and his compassion for the individual, although it has little to do with socialism as we understand it today. It is well written and, as with all Wilde's works, humorous and multi-layered. Only fifty copies were printed, and many of these are likely to have been burnt following Wilde's fall from grace, so this pamphlet is now extremely difficult to find. In November 1907, Humphreys republished the book in cloth boards of various colours, and these editions are much easier to locate.

The year 1895 found Wilde at the very pinnacle of his fame, with numerous books in print and two plays running to full houses in the West End. The Prince of Wales even attended the first night of *An Ideal Husband*. Oscar felt invincible, but his success only infuriated his nemesis, the Marquess of Queensberry, Bosie's father. The story of Wilde's disastrous libel suit against the Marquess, and the two subsequent trials —

the first inconclusive, the second resulting in two years' hard labour for the wretched author — is well documented. Wilde was convicted on the evidence of rent boys whom he had treated exceptionally well, but who were now in the pay of the Marquess. They perjured themselves in the witness box and, despite the fact that they were no less guilty than Wilde, they escaped prosecution, although most of them subsequently ended up in prison for other offences.

HYPOCRISY

The backlash against Wilde was unprecedented and showed the full extent of Victorian moral hypocrisy. The judge even went as far as to describe the case as the "worst ... I have ever tried", and complained that the sentence of two years' hard labour was "totally inadequate". The press took up the story, and Wilde's wife and two sons were forced to flee the country and change their surname to Holland. Few men have suffered, and lost, so much — it must be one of the most tragic events in the history of literature.

In the aftermath of the trials, Wilde's works were removed from bookshops, so-called friends ripped out the inscribed pages from his limited editions, his books were burnt, and his unpublished manuscripts stolen. Wilde nearly died in prison, and the sufferings he endured there certainly contributed to his early death. On 19th May 1897, he was finally released from Reading Gaol, after serving every single day of his sentence. He promptly left for France, never to return to England.

For all its horrors, Wilde's prison term did inspire two of his most important works, including what is undoubtedly his most popular poem. On his release from gaol, Wilde was particularly upset by the sight of three small children arriving just as he was about to leave. He promptly wrote a moving appeal to the papers, and this letter was subsequently issued in pamphlet-form by Murdoch & Co under the title, *Children in Prison and Other Cruelties of Prison Life*.

Wilde's next book, his first substantial publication for almost four years, was *The Ballad of Reading Gaol*, which appeared on 13th February 1898. Wilde was an outcast, and short of funds, and so he had considerable difficulty in finding a publisher for this magnificent poem. Eventually Leonard Smithers, a seller of erotic literature, agreed to issue the book, producing a handsome volume bound in cinnamon and white linen gilt and printed on Van Gelder hand-made paper. It was priced at a mere 2/6 — rather less than Wilde's previous poem, *The Sphinx*. The author was given as 'C.3.3.', Wilde's prison number, but his true identity was widely known. Smithers only risked printing 400 copies, although he also produced a 'De Luxe edition' of thirty numbered copies printed on Japanese vellum. These cost one guinea.

In the event, the poem was a huge success, one shop selling fifty copies on the morning of publication. Realising his mistake, Smithers quickly issued several more editions, running to thousands of copies. The third edition is of particular interest to collectors as all 99 copies were numbered and signed by the author under his real name (although he was still given as 'C.3.3.' on the title-page). They were bound in purple linen with a white linen spine

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The Sphinx was Ricketts' finest achievement. This copy fetched \$2,300 at Sotheby's New York in October.

and a gilt design by Ricketts on the front cover. These now fetch up to £2,000 in Very Good condition. The seventh edition, issued on 15th March 1899, is also important as it was the first to carry Wilde's name on the title-page (although in brackets).

Smithers was very good to Wilde during his last few years, and after Oscar's death he continued to publish pirate editions of *Reading Gaol* to recoup some of the money which he had lent the impecunious author. (Ross finally put an end to this practice by threatening litigation.) These can be distinguished from the authorised editions by the fact that Smithers' address is missing from their title-pages. These unauthorised editions now sell for £10-£15 in Very Good condition.

Wilde produced no more works after *The Ballad of Reading Gaol*, proclaiming: "I wrote when I did not know life, now that I know the meaning of life, I have no more to write." But he was constantly short of money, and so he agreed to the publication of his two last plays.

The first to appear was *The Importance of Being Earnest*, which Smithers published in an edition of 1,000 copies in February 1899. These were uniform with the two earlier comedies being bound in light red-brown boards gilt, decorated with designs by Charles Shannon. Wilde's name did not appear on the title-page.

VELLUM

Smithers also issued a De Luxe edition, comprising 100 copies on Dutch hand-made paper, numbered and signed by the author, and selling at one guinea. In addition, there was a presentation edition of twelve copies printed on Japanese vellum, numbered and signed by the author, and bound in vellum. A copy of the trade edition ("spine slightly faded") fetched £460 at Christie's South Kensington last November, while the two signed editions sell for £3,000-£4,000 and £4,000-£6,000+ respectively.

Five months later, in July 1899, Smithers issued *An Ideal Husband* in three editions, all

of them uniform with the earlier play. These sell for slightly less than *Earnest* (see price guide), a copy of the trade edition fetching £126 at the Christie's South Kensington sale.

An Ideal Husband was the last of Wilde's books to appear during his lifetime. He died in Paris on 30th November 1900, aged only 46, and was buried in the city's Père Lachaise Cemetery.

LETTER

However, interesting books by Wilde continued to appear after this date. On 23rd February 1905, the literary world was set alight by the publication of part of a long letter which Wilde wrote to Lord Alfred Douglas in the first months of 1897, when he was still in prison. Robert Ross, Wilde's literary executor, removed all of the bitter attacks against Douglas, and it was generally believed at the time that the letter had been addressed to Ross himself. He entitled the book *De Profundis*, although Wilde had referred to it as 'Epistola: in Carcere et Vinculis' ('Letter in Prison and in Chains').

It was issued by Methuen, in blue buckram gilt with a Charles Ricketts cover design representing a bird escaping through prison bars. The book was a huge success, an eventuality which Methuen had anticipated by ordering an initial print-run of 10,000 copies. They also printed 200 copies on English hand-made paper in white buckram boards, and fifty copies on Japanese vellum in limp vellum covers. The latter two editions are very collectable (£200-£300 and £1,000-£1,500 respectively), but the first is relatively inexpensive due to the size of the impression.

In 1908, a fuller version was published, although the identity of the recipient was still not revealed. However, the world discovered the truth in 1913 when Lord Alfred Douglas sued for libel after a biography to which Ross had provided assistance hinted that the letter was addressed to Bosie and blamed him for Wilde's downfall. Douglas and Ross, both ex-lovers of Wilde, had fallen out long before this, and ever since had been locked in a bitter feud.

The original manuscript had been bequeathed to the British Museum in 1908, with the proviso that its contents should not

be made public until fifty years had elapsed. Nevertheless, it was brought into court and read aloud. Douglas lost the case, as it was decided that, although he *had* been libelled, the accusations in the disputed biography were essentially true. In response, he decided to publish his reply to the letter, quoting the expurgated passages.

Fearing that he would lose copyright in America, Ross sent over a typescript of the 'suppressed portion' by the first boat and had sixteen copies hurriedly printed by the New York firm of Paul R. Reynolds. Only one copy was offered for sale, as required by American law, and it was priced at \$500 to discourage potential buyers. However, this copy *was* bought by a mystery purchaser, whose identity has never been discovered. This edition is full of errors and omissions, but is nevertheless a highly desirable item. Unfortunately, all the copies are held in public collections and are unlikely ever to come on the market.

The story doesn't end there. In a sale of Wilde's books and manuscripts held in 1928, Douglas discovered a letter from Oscar to Ross instructing Robert to send the original letter to him, Lord Alfred. However, Ross had sent him one of the typescripts, which Douglas, after reading the first few lines, had promptly thrown into the fire. He now decided to try to obtain the manuscript from the British Museum on the grounds that it was stolen property. But his efforts came to nothing. He had insufficient funds to press his case, and would have been unlikely to win in any event.

FULL TEXT

Wilde's son, Vyvyan, wanted to publish the full text during the 1930s, but could not agree terms with Douglas, and had to wait until after Lord Alfred's death in 1945. In 1949, he published what he believed to be the full text based upon Ross's 1897 typescript, adding an introduction of his own. The book was again issued by Methuen, in blue buckram boards gilt and a grey printed dustjacket. This edition is fairly common and shouldn't cost more than £15 in Very Good condition. In the style of his father, Vyvyan also issued a signed, limited edition.

THE
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The Importance of Being Earnest was first published in 1899, just a year before Wilde's death.

The letter was finally made available to the general public in 1960, and it was then discovered that the typescripts made by Ross in 1897 omitted more than 1,000 words. In addition, paragraphs had been moved and there were simple errors of transcription. Finally, in 1962, some 65 years after it was originally written, the full version of Oscar's final testimony was published in *The Letters of Oscar Wilde*.

De Profundis is one of the most moving letters ever written, regardless of which version you read. In fact, many people prefer the abridged text, omitting the bitter attacks on Douglas which can distract from the overall pathos of the work. Seldom has a single letter had such an impact on the lives of so many people over such a long time.

The sales of *De Profundis* provided the money to clear Wilde's bankruptcy, and also helped to re-establish his literary reputation. Another landmark was Ross's decision to publish Wilde's *Complete Works*, which were issued by Methuen in 1908 in fourteen matching demy octavo volumes. As well as the standard issue of 1,000 sets — printed on

hand-made paper, top edges gilt, in white buckram boards with gilt designs by Charles Ricketts and in loose green paper dustjackets — there was a De Luxe edition (eighty copies) printed on Japanese vellum in limp vellum covers and gray paper dustjackets. The sets now sell for £2,000-£2,500 and £4,000-£6,000 respectively. Numerous cheaper editions of Wilde's works followed.

The next major Wilde publication was the monumental *Bibliography of Oscar Wilde* (1914) compiled by 'Stuart Mason' (the pseudonym of Christopher Millard). This book is one of the finest bibliographies ever produced, and in its 600 pages there are over 100 illustrations and facsimiles, as well as detailed information about everything Wilde ever published in book-form or in magazines. Copies are extremely sought-after by collectors, and sell for between £200 and £300, or twice that for the two-volume signed edition.

The 'Suppressed Portion' of *De Profundis* was issued by Robert Ross in 1913 for copyright purposes.

THE SUPPRESSED PORTION
OF
"DE PROFUNDIS"

By OSCAR WILDE

NOW FOR THE FIRST TIME PUBLISHED
BY HIS LITERARY EXECUTOR
ROBERT ROSS



PAUL R. REYNOLDS
New York
1913.

In 1921, Vyvyan Holland published an enlarged version of Wilde's essay on Shakespeare's sonnets, *The Portrait of Mr W.H.*, taken from a manuscript which had been lost for 26 years before being found at the bottom of a publisher's drawer. A total of 1,000 numbered copies were issued by Mitchell Kennerley of New York in black cloth with gilt lettering and Wilde's facsimile signature in gilt. These now sell for up to £100 in Very Good condition, compared to £15-£20 for the 1958 British edition.

Of greater importance was the publication in 1962 of *The Letters of Oscar Wilde*, brilliantly edited by Rupert Hart-Davis. Bound in red cloth with a pink dustjacket, this book now sells for up to £100 in Very Good condition. It is greatly preferable to the *Selected Letters* which appeared in 1979 and now sells for up to £20, as does *More Letters of Oscar Wilde* from 1985. Fortunately, Fourth Estate have contracted Wilde's grandson, Merlin Holland, to edit a new edition of the *Collected Letters*,

which the publishers claim will be some 50% longer than the 1962 collection. They hope to publish the book in time for the centenary in 2000.

Numerous limited and special editions of Wilde's writings have appeared over the years, but these in themselves would fill another article. For those of us who do not possess unlimited funds and patience, all of Wilde's wonderful works can be obtained for a mere £13.99 in a single hardback volume published by HarperCollins as part of their 'Collins Classics' series. After all, his works were written to be read and enjoyed by all.

As for the new film, this will no doubt only increase interest in Wilde — and, unfortunately for collectors, raise the price of his books still further.

Details of The Oscar Wilde Society can be obtained by sending an S.A.E. to: 154 Derwent Road, Leighton Buzzard, Bedfordshire LU7 7XT. 'Wilde' goes on general release from 17th October.

OSCAR WILDE UK BIBLIOGRAPHY

A guide to current values of first editions in Very Good condition.

NOVELS AND STORIES

THE PICTURE OF DORIAN GRAY (Ward Lock, 1891)	£600-£1,000
ditto. Large Paper Edition (limited to 75 copies, signed by the author) (Ward Lock, 1891) ...	£2,000-£3,000
ditto. Second Edition (Ward Lock, 1895)	£50-£100
LORD ARTHUR SAVILE'S CRIME and Other Stories (Osgood McIlvaine, 1891)	£200-£250

POETRY

RAVENNA (wrappers) (Thomas Shrimpton, 1878)	£500-£800
POEMS (David Bogue, 1881)	£500-£800
ditto. Second and Third Editions (David Bogue, 1881)	each £100-£200
ditto. Fourth Edition (David Bogue, 1882)	£100-£200
ditto. Signed Edition (limited to 220 numbered copies, signed by the author) (Mathews & Lane, 1892)	£2,000-£3,000
THE SPHINX (limited to 200 copies) (Mathews & Lane, 1894)	£2,000-£3,000
ditto. Large Paper Edition (limited to 25 copies) (Mathews & Lane, 1894)	£3,000-£4,000
THE BALLAD OF READING GAOL (limited to 800 copies; 'by C.3.3.') (Smithers, 1898)	£150-£200
ditto. De Luxe Edition (limited to thirty copies, printed on Japanese vellum; 'by C.3.3.') (Smithers, 1898)	£1,000-£1,500
ditto. Second Edition ('by C.3.3.') (Smithers, 1898)	£50-£100
ditto. Third [Signed] Edition (limited to 99 copies, signed by the author ['as Oscar Wilde']); 'by C.3.3.' (Smithers, 1898)	£1,500-£2,000
ditto. Seventh Edition (with Wilde's name given in square brackets) (Smithers, 1899)	£50-£100

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**BACK ISSUES L-Z WILL BE
PUBLISHED NEXT MONTH**



VAL BIRO

ILLUSTRATOR AND CREATOR OF 'GUMDROP'

BY MARTIN SPENCE

I might just as well drive a horse and cart!" shouted Val Biro after his car conked out yet again, making him miss the Channel ferry. So, suiting his actions to his words, the distinguished illustrator did just that. And that was how Cherry, a bay mare somewhat older than her supposed age, came into the Biro family's life in the late 1950s. Their garage was converted into a stable, Cherry had four lush acres of grazing, the family enjoyed looking after her, and Biro's small daughter, Melissa, loved being driven to school in the new cart.

By 1961, however, Cherry was getting a bit ancient for the daily school run, and Val Biro decided to look for a car again. "Nothing new, of course, and it must have a soft hood." A 1948 Rover discovered in the small ads sounded just the job, so the family drove over from Chesham in the Chilterns to Oxford to see it. But on the way they came to a small village called Hardwick with a very old-fashioned garage.

"I glanced across and saw that in the yard beside the garage stood a car. An old — a very old — car with a soft hood and a brass radiator. I stopped and we looked at it more closely. It was a vintage car of about 1926, an Austin Heavy 12/4, the Clifton model. I walked round the car, looked at the leather seats, the brass lamps, the elegantly curved mud-guards, the aluminium-covered running boards — and I fell passionately in love with it. We bought it on the spot. We towed it home, gave it the name of Gumdrop and it changed my life."

Val Biro has been second-time lucky at everything. He narrowly escaped the Nazis in his native Hungary to make a fresh start as an illustrator in London. When his first marriage failed, he moved on to a successful second. When his first car gave up on him, the second proved a winner. And, even more amazingly, when his first attempt at a children's book — the exceptionally scarce *Bumpy's Holiday* (Sylvan Press, 1943) — sank almost without trace, his second, *Gumdrop: The Adventures of a Vintage Car* (1966), produced after a 23-year gap, was an instant hit, and inspired a long-running series.

Almost by chance, Biro had stumbled on an untapped area in illustrated books for very young children. Noddy had been driving his little red-and-yellow car ("Parp! Parp!") since the early 1950s, and the Reverend W. Awdry's Thomas the Tank Engine (see BMC 141) had been steaming down the tracks since 1946. But Biro's car, *Gumdrop* ("Honk! Honk!"), was not just an accessory but a personage in his own right.

More to the point, he represented a means of transport with which almost all children were familiar. Within a decade of *Gumdrop's* first appearance, trains in Britain, unlike the Continent, would become a downgraded anachronism on which most youngsters, like Members of Parliament, would never travel. After TV and school (of little interest to the children of the 1960s and their successors), the world of the car would be the dominant one for many five- to seven-year-olds who had rarely walked more than a few hundred yards, used a bus or even seen a train. And Val Biro's invariable plot-hook — car theft — was immediately recognisable as a thrilling everyday occurrence which, as the years rolled on, was likely to have touched his readers' lives at some point.

Val Biro's eventful life began on 6th October 1921 when he was born Balint Stephen Biro in Budapest. "The Twenties were just as

BUMPY'S HOLIDAY



*Biro's first children's book, **Bumpy's Holiday** (1943), predates the 'Gumdrop' series by 23 years. It now sells for up to £50 in Fine condition.*

Twentyish in Budapest as in the rest of Europe," he recalls, "though provincial Hungary remained firmly in an Edwardian — or indeed nineteenth century world, and remained there until 1939."

DASHING

His parents both came from the country. His father, a dashing ex-officer with a magnificent moustache, was born in Verbasz, once part of southern Hungary, now in Yugoslavia. His mother, a young woman of exceptional beauty, came from Gyulahaza, hidden away in north-eastern Hungary close to the border with Russia. It was a love match, and Biro's elder sister, Lila, was their first-born child. "My father remained a countryman all his life, though he practised that most metropolitan of professions, the law. However, my mother took to the bright lights of Budapest like a character out of Tchekhov. She was an accomplished linguist, a good pianist, an avid reader."

Throughout Val's childhood, the Biro family lived happily in a spacious flat overlooking the Gothic towers of the Houses of Parliament in Budapest. An old photograph from the family album shows the thirteen-year-old Biro standing on the narrow ledge of their balcony in plus-fours and a neat white



*Biro has had a long and successful career as a book and dustjacket illustrator. This dramatic engraving accompanied 'My Madmen', one of the stories in Paul Tabori's 1944 Sylvan Press collection, **Private Gallery**.*

open-necked shirt, gazing down at a tram in the street far below. In the distance behind him is the glassy breadth of the Danube. His earliest memories include "long walks along the Danube, scooting in the parks, learning to ride a bike in the quiet streets opposite, listening avidly to the wireless or, awestruck, to an old aunt who sang for us on our newly installed telephone. There were magic white Christmases when a window was left open so that the Angel could bring in the tree. Santa Claus came on the sixth of December, bringing a sackful of small presents. He was accompanied, to our half-delighted horror, by the Devil, who would birch us in case we had been naughty. (I found out later that Santa was really the janitor of our block, who was nearly always drunk, and the Devil was his son, a motor mechanic of doubtful reputation.)"

After primary school ("a small outfit run by two desiccated spinsters in a strict and endless routine of learning by rote") came

proper school at the age of eleven ("a huge place of 700 pupils run by monks of the Cistercian order"). But Biro respected them as men of knowledge, humour and warmth, not to mention strength of arm. "I remember the occasion when I secretly drew a caricature of the maths master and showed it to George who sat next to me. He sniggered and the master called us out. He looked down at my drawing in silence. Then he put it down, grabbed us both by the hair and banged our heads together. As he did so, he spoke: 'This young man will go far. But not, repeat, not during my lessons.' My head was whirling as I sat down at last, but it must have been then that I decided to become an artist."

Summer holidays on his Uncle Miklos' farm were "something else", skiing on the hills of Buda "a passion" and drawing "a greater passion still". Soon Biro found himself trying political cartoons in the style of Strube of the *Daily Express*, and even Daumier. In the mid-Thirties, with the rise of Fascism in the

West, politics in Hungary became increasingly polarised, and Biro began to have heated arguments with the growing minority of Nazis at school.

"My father," he wrote later, "knew only too well what was in store, and he arranged for me to go to London to study art. I shall never cease to be grateful to him for that — he not only changed my life, he probably saved it." Val Biro left Budapest in July 1939 and never saw his father again. Biro senior died in 1944; two days later, the Gestapo called to arrest him as a political suspect.

To Biro in 1939, London was still the centre of an Empire, the foggy home of Sherlock Holmes, John Buchan, Jeeves and large policemen. In September came the fateful voice on the wireless announcing that England was at war with Germany.

Long before he had heard of Auschwitz and Büchenwald, Biro had seen the corrupting influence of Nazi beliefs at firsthand. He soon became convinced that the Second World War was not only unavoidable, but also necessary and just. But he never felt the same about the Cold War ("an artificial rivalry between two superpowers"), Vietnam ("a cruel disaster"), the Falklands ("a last gasp of ex-Imperialist Britain") or the Gulf War ("a conflict without just cause and without a regard to its consequences").

EVACUATED

In September 1939, Biro registered with the police as an 'enemy alien' after "Hungary had joined the wrong side yet again". Luckily, he was never interned, but instead allowed to join the Central School of Arts in London and then evacuated to Northampton. There he began to realise that there was more to art than drawing funny faces: there was the life class. "With a strict Cistercian upbringing and a family that never dreamed of discussing anything more intimate than the filling of a sandwich, I found myself face to face — or buttock — with a model in all her nakedness for the first time. It was a delightful shock."

Biro's main subject at art school was illustration, and among his tutors was John Farleigh, who provided the dramatic wood-engravings for Shaw's *The Adventures of the*

Black Girl in Her Search for God (see BMC 66). Slowly, he began to realise that drawing was not just a technical matter, but also an emotional one. He developed an enduring love of wood engraving, which he would later use for many books, including his Hungarian folk-tales for the Oxford University Press. But economic necessity led him to drawing — in the time it took to produce just one engraving, Biro found that he could produce four drawings. Graphics, or commercial art as it was then called, beckoned.

CATCH-22

Freelancing for an unknown youngster was then, as now, tough. You showed your portfolio hopefully, they told you to get your work published elsewhere and then come back ("The perfect Catch-22," says Biro). But he was lucky. Quite quickly, he was commissioned to do his first book jacket for five guineas (£5.25). Then, in 1942, another publisher offered him the job of studio assistant at a salary of £3 a week. That was the day job. Biro was barred from joining the forces, but not from joining the National Fire Service. That was the night job.

Val Biro says today that he learned more from his work at Charles Rosner's small Sylvan Press than he did at college. It was Rosner — a member of that vanished species, the patron — who gave him his first book commissions, *Private Gallery* (1944) by Paul Tabori and *Worlds Without End* (1945) by Denys Val Baker. Both books are now collector's items, fetching around £15-£20 today in Fine condition. And it was Rosner, too, who commissioned Biro's first-ever children's book — and his first, until Gumdrop, as author and illustrator.

According to its creator, *Bumpy's Holiday* (Sylvan Press, 1943), was "a slight story about a baby elephant who gets a ride on a toy train at a funfair". Biro found his internal illustrations to it "not much better, because drawing on zinc plates required a lot more experience than I had at the time. This commission had come too soon, and I regard it now as a first trial rather than my first book. Also, at that time, I did not regard children's books as proper work for a real artist."

GUMDROP ON THE MOVE

Story and Pictures by Val Biro



Biro is best known for his long-running series of children's picture books featuring the lovable little car, *Gumdrop*. The 'character' is based on an Austin Clifton Heavy, which Biro bought in the early 1960s and still uses.

But despite his disclaimers, the opening sentences of Biro's first book have an unmistakably contemporary feel. "Bumpy was a baby black elephant who lived in a town quite near to London. One morning he awoke to find the sun streaming in at the window . . . it was his birthday. Now you would have thought that it would have made Bumpy very happy to have a birthday, but his father had been out of work for such a long time that he couldn't possibly afford to buy any presents."

PRIMITIVE

And if the storyline was somewhat predictable, the charmingly primitive black-and-white drawings of little Bumpy and the colour-blocked spreads of London street life most certainly were not. Each spread carried a different picture and, given the restrictions of Biro's chosen medium, the style — ranging from chirpy and colourful to dark and menacing — was remarkably varied.

The book is oblong in format and has a red cloth spine and very fragile picture boards, which means that copies in even Good

condition are very hard to find today. The front cover is ocean-blue and sandwiches a small picture of Bumpy and a toy train between the two words of the title, which are hand-lettered — the first in black, the second in purple. The steam shown puffing from the toy engine is so realistic that, in a mistaken attempt to improve copies for sale, dealers have been known to try to rub it off.

The title-page displays a small vignette of Bumpy — blue-grey in colour — on a yellow background. Below him are the words "By Biro", the author retaining the single surname, cartoonist-style, for his first book. The work is "lovingly dedicated to his mother by the Author".

Bumpy's Holiday now sells for up to £50 in Very Good condition. It remains Biro's most expensive item, and is probably the most sought-after of all the 400-plus books he has so far illustrated.

Two years after this book was published, Val Biro married his first wife, Vivien Woolley. She was a strong-featured woman who had served in the Auxiliary Territorial Service and

whose eyebrows were almost as pronounced as Biro's (although, unlike his, they did not join up in the middle).

At this crucial point, Biro switched jobs. It was with another small publisher and, as production manager, a small step up. While working there he met Arthur Wragg, who inspired his lifelong interest in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century art and also pointed him towards his next job, that of art director of John Lehmann Ltd. His boss there, Lehmann himself, was the founding editor of *Penguin New Writing*, an influential literary magazine of the time. He also published many of the most distinguished writers of the century in a wide range of fields: Tennessee Williams, the Sitwells, Gore Vidal, Fanny Cradock and Elizabeth David.

Biro's new job was to look after the physical presentation of their books. He found the task uniquely stimulating and learned a lot from Lehmann, who was an exceptionally liberal employer. Within a year, he had arranged Biro's work so that he could do a four-day week only and spend the remainder

of his time on freelance projects. It was a double life for Biro once more. He vividly remembers doing a jacket for Leonard Russell's *The Saturday Book* that was wanted yesterday, so to speak. He worked right through the night, finished it at 8am, got it to Hutchinson by 9am and was at his desk at Lehmann by 9.45.

The Biro's daughter, Melissa ("an enchanting baby"), was born in 1951 when Val was thirty and busy illustrating — always in black-and-white — such classics as Bulwer-Lytton's *Last Days of Pompeii*, Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* and Enid Bagnold's charming novella, *Serena Blandish* (Pan, 1951). Life was fine until the fateful day when Lehmann Ltd folded. Purnells, the managing owners, were asking for more revenue and John Lehmann had refused to go down-market. Biro was left with a choice. Should he take the new job with a pension, which Lehmann had kindly and miraculously found for him, or should he go completely freelance? Next day, he resigned and wrote round to every publisher in London begging for work.

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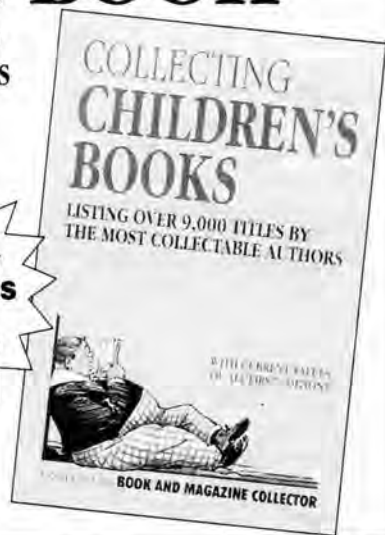
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HUNGARIAN

Folk-tales



Retold and Illustrated by
Val Biro

This selection of *Hungarian Folk-Tales* (1981) was the first of several such anthologies to be compiled by Biro.

"Publishing in those days," he later wrote, "was still an occupation for gentlemen, most firms being in the charge of one individual who was, by and large, human. I wonder what the response would have been today, with most imprints absorbed into conglomerates or managed by accountants?"

But back in 1953, Biro found no shortage of work, even if the need for discipline was greater than ever. From this first day of so-called freedom, he had to keep his nose glued firmly to the drawing board, but the book jacket work was stimulating and prestigious. Amongst his commissions were titles by C.S. Forester, Monica Dickens, Joyce Cary, Norah Lofts, Noel Coward, and above all Nevil Shute, who wrote from down under especially to congratulate a jacket artist who so obviously knew the Australian background at firsthand (Biro had never been there)! By 1960, the creator of *Gumdrop* was probably

designing more jackets for the then-buoyant hardback market than any other artist in Britain.

Around this time, Biro began his 21-year association with *Radio Times*, then at its height with a weekly circulation of over ten million copies. Ralph Underwood, its new editor, had remembered his work from Odhams and rang to ask him to provide a drawing of a singing angel. This was the first of hundreds of illustrations which Biro drew for the magazine, at the rate of one a week, and usually between Friday and Monday ("which ruined our weekends").

By the late 1950s, Biro had illustrated an impressive number and range of children's books by authors such as Leila Berg, Norman Berg and Margaret Holden — and even an advent calendar by Dorothy L. Sayers. He also started work on a series of books by Dora Thatcher featuring Tommy the Tugboat and Henry the Helicopter. There were book jackets, magazine and newspaper illustrations, regular covers for *Homes and Gardens*, *Radio Times* — and then there was *Gumdrop*.

A couple of years after the old Austin Clifton had come into Biro's life, he was commissioned by Ewart Wharmby of the Brockhampton Press to illustrate a new book and drove over to Leicester in *Gumdrop* to discuss it. Biro says now that he rambled on so much about his car that Wharmby must have been bored to tears. "By the way," said his host as they shook hands after lunch, "why don't you write a story about that car of yours? I'd like to see it."

Two simple sentences were all that it took to turn Biro into a children's author again after a 23-year interval. By the time he reached home, he had worked out a plot, and within two days, *Gumdrop: The Adventure of a Vintage Car* had been written, revised and typed out for the Brockhampton Press.

"He was a very old car, and his proper name was Austin Clifton Twelve-Four. But everybody called him *Gumdrop*. His owner, Mr Oldcastle, was so lonely that he had to go and live with his daughter and sell his car, but he kept the old brass horn." But one night, the car is stolen and the incompetent thieves crash him in town. *Gumdrop* loses more parts;

his headlamps are found in the battered remains of the greengrocer's pavement display, his battery and engine are stolen to run a cement mixer, his wheels commandeered by a traveller for his caravan. The stripped-down Gumdrop is finally sold to a new and younger owner, Bill McArran, who eventually restores his lost bits.

With theft and recapture as a recurring theme — Gumdrop is invariably being stolen or helping his owner to catch thieves — most children would have enjoyed the books without its charming star. But Gumdrop is unique among anthropomorphised children's characters. His shape is never fantasised, he has no face or expression (unlike the Rev Awdry's little engines), and his visual presentation is accurate in every detail. The last page of *Gumdrop: The Adventures of a Vintage Car* shows a superb cross-section of a 1926 Austin.

PRESENCE

Neither does Gumdrop talk or think. Uniquely in children's books, he is established as a powerful presence without the use of direct description. It is the reaction of other characters — Mr Oldcastle, Bill McArran, forecourt attendants, kids and crooks — to Gumdrop, and his creator's habit of apostrophising the car as 'him' that gives him life, substance and authentic character. Hence his enormous appeal to vast numbers of very young children brought up in a car-culture.

"I knew the book had to make thirty-two pages," says Biro, "so I roughly sketched out the pictures in a dummy book, indicating where the text would go, and when it seemed to be working out well I sent it all off post

haste to Ewart Wharmby at Brockhampton Press. Within two days, he rang to say he liked it and that a contract was in the post. I realise how lucky I was. But I had three things in my favour: a ready-made subject for a children's book, a sympathetic publisher whom I knew well and, most importantly, a book that was requested by a publisher rather than being sent in from the cold."

Gumdrop: The Adventures of a Vintage Car was published by Brockhampton Press in 1966. "Colour printing was not nearly as accurate as it is today," Biro later wrote, "and I was a little disappointed with the result, but the book did well." Today, the first 'Gumdrop' adventure fetches up to £30 in Fine condition.

Follett of Chicago published the first four 'Gumdrop' books in America, and these editions are now much sought-after and very scarce. The second title in the series, *Gumdrop and the Farmer's Friend*, was published in 1967 in a co-edition with Follett, and also filmed for BBC's *Playschool*. "The only suggestion that Ewart Wharmby had made for the new story was that I should keep young Bill McArran as Gumdrop's owner because he thought Mr Oldcastle was too old a character."

Biro complied for the third title, *Gumdrop on the Rally* (1968), which, like its predecessor, now fetches up to £20 in Fine condition with the dustjacket (the later books are in laminated boards). This particular rally featured a thief, a horsebox, a gymkhana, a crowd of hitch-hiking pigs, a blazing hayrick, a fire engine and an angry motorcycle. Needless to say, Gumdrop receives a special brass starting handle as a reward for solving the mystery of the stolen prizes.



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GUMDROP GETS HIS WINGS

Val Biro



Gumdrop Gets His Wings (1979) is one of 35 books featuring the little car. A new title is due out next year.

But, in an early protest against ageism, Biro brought Mr Oldcastle back with a bang for the fourth book, *Gumdrop on the Move* (1969), at the end of which he announces that he is going to keep hold of the car "forever". Which he has done, bless him.

"To begin with," Biro says, "I had no rules or formulae for writing children's picture books, except that they had to be of a certain length (short), contain a lot of action (to provide a new subject for illustrations on each succeeding spread), and that they had to contain some tension, anxiety or even alarm which would be resolved in a happy ending. Most importantly, the text and pictures had to be closely integrated for the younger reader of five to seven who was just beginning to read for himself."

He subsequently learned an enormous amount about structuring a story from the distinguished children's writer and creator of the 'Bobby Brewster' series, H.E. Todd. Todd believed that a story should be circular, pulling the narrative round to a conclusion that somehow reflected the start. Biro also took

note of Todd's conviction that there should be no more than three main themes, happenings or high points during the story.

The upshot was a collaboration between the two men which ran through no fewer than fourteen children's books — including *The Scruffy, Scruffy Dog* and *The Tiger Who Couldn't Be Bothered* — and ended with *The Sleeping Policeman*, which was published just days before Todd's death in 1988 at the age of eighty. With its laminated covers and almost square format, this last book is very similar in appearance to the 'Gumdrop' series, and Biro's cover picture is a corker — the rotund Constable Tufftummy is shown using his eponymous stomach for the purpose of traffic-calming.

BUDAPEST

In 1969, Biro returned to Budapest for the first time since the war. The country was still under Communist rule. Staying at an hotel on Lenin Boulevard, Biro was startled on his first morning by a call from reception saying that some gentlemen were waiting downstairs for him. Fearing a visit from the KGB, Biro went down with some trepidation into the private room indicated and found twelve middle-aged strangers waiting for him round a table. Turning as one man, they raised their glasses to him, shouting, "Welcome home!" Examining their faces more closely, Biro recognised them as old schoolfriends, whom he'd not seen since they were all eighteen years old.

Back in England, Biro had to endure the break-up of his marriage of 25 years, although he remarried soon afterwards. His second wife, Marie-Louise Biro, known always as Mimi, was the child of a Greek father and a French mother, and had been brought up in London and Alexandria. "I was immensely lucky that I could persuade Mimi to marry me. She was a divorcee also, and her two children came with her, thus giving me a delightful ready-made family. It took them a little while to get accustomed to their stepfather, especially as they were nine and fourteen years old respectively."

What helped the adjusting process more than anything was the arrival of a new member of the Biro — and later, the

Gumdrop — family: a lovable Cocker Spaniel puppy who came to rule their lives. "Eventually he became so popular with my readers (and I loved him so much during his fourteen years of life) that he continues to get up to his tricks in my latest books."

The years of adjustment — Biro was 48 when he remarried — brought a move to Amersham in Buckinghamshire and a series of cookery-illustration commissions, including one for Robert Carrier's new *Cookery Course*. "There was a budget for the purchase of food to draw from, which helped my drawings — but not our waistlines."

The changes in the publishing world which occurred during the Seventies, particularly the merging of small houses into enormous conglomerates, significantly reduced the number of dustjacket commissions which Biro received. This was because "designs were more likely to be produced in-house or given to multiple design-practices with up-to-date marketing orientation".

Undeterred, Biro simply switched to internal illustration — for J.B.H. Peel's country books (see BMC 85), Jean Plaidy's historical novels (see BMC 109), and individual works by a vast range of authors, from Enid Blyton to Christina Hole (her *English Folk Customs*). And, of course, there was still a yearly 'Gumdrop'. (The Brockhampton Press was re-absorbed into Hodder & Stoughton in the mid-Seventies — prompting the retirement of Biro's mentor, Eric Wharmby — which means that all the books after *Gumdrop in Trouble* [1975] bear the Hodder imprint.)

As a rough guide to their value, titles from *Gumdrop Goes to London* (Brockhampton, 1971)

to *Gumdrop on the Brighton Run* (Hodder, 1976) now fetch £5-£10 in Fine condition, while subsequent titles from *Gumdrop has a Birthday* (1977) onwards command no more than £5, even in Mint condition.

As well as the hardback editions, completists will also want the paperbacks, which were published by Hodder under their Knight imprint, and also by Puffin. In addition, there have been foreign editions (all of them very collectable) from places as far apart as Iceland and South Africa — including four from Hungary. There was even a very scarce pirated edition in Chinese. "It gave me a lot of satisfaction," says Biro, "but no money."

FOLK-TALES

In the early 1980s, as he entered his seventh decade, Val Biro embarked on yet another career when he compiled and illustrated the first of several collections of folk-tales. He had always loved the legends of his native Hungary, and had earlier tried his hand at a single Hungarian folk-tale, *The Honest Thief* (Brockhampton, 1972). But *Hungarian Folk-Tales* (OUP, 1980) was a much more substantial and expertly written (with a little help from Marie-Louise Biro) work, and was a key volume in the distinguished 'Oxford Myths and Legends' series. With scores of striking monochrome illustrations that owe a little to Arthur Rackham and a lot to Biro, this book now fetches up to £10 in Very Good condition. It was also published in Spain, where it sold a remarkable 100,000 copies.

Says Biro: "I came to enjoy the process of re-telling so much that I embarked on a series

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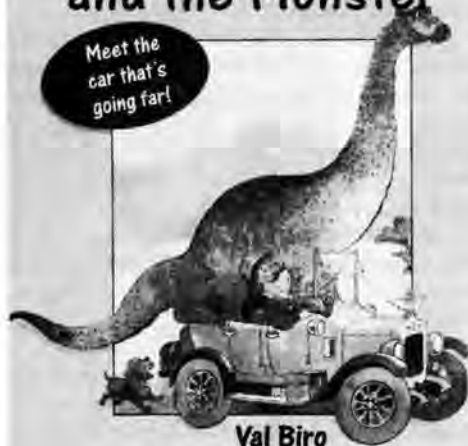
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GUMDROP and the Monster

Meet the
car that's
going far!



Val Biro

Gumdrop and the Monster features a media-shy Nessie. This is the new revamped edition from Hodder.

of re-told picture books for OUP, such as *The Magic Doctor* (1982), *The Hobyahs* (1985), *The Donkey That Sneezed* (1986) and *The Pied Piper of Hamelin* (in which I altered the ending of Browning's original version and got into critical hot water as a result). During this period, Biro also compiled and illustrated an eighteen-volume edition of *Aesop's Fables*, and an eight-volume set of Hans Andersen's *Tales*, both for the specialist publishers, Ginn & Wright. In addition, he worked on a wide range of educational books for Macmillan, Longman and Cassell.

In 1984, the Biro family moved from Amersham to Bosham, a small former fishing village on an inlet in Chichester harbour. Biro had first visited this beautiful place a couple of years before, and had spent a whole summer simply sketching the scenery. The upshot was one of the most charming 'Gumdrop' books, *Gumdrop at Sea* (1982). "It remains one of my most autobiographical stories, with Horace (of course), Mimi, and also our other dog, Humphrey, pictured within."

To date, there have been no fewer than 35 books about the legendary Austin Heavy, with Biro bravely tackling everything from practical safety issues to myths and legends. For example, *Gumdrop Gets his Wings* (Hodder, 1979) opens with a typically imaginative but very practical memory-jogger (printed on the front end-paper) about the Highway Code.

By contrast, *Gumdrop and the Monster* (1985) shows Gumdrop saving the Loch Ness Monster, a soft-spoken Scottish mother-of-four, from any public figure's worst enemy: the media. Completists will also want the 'Gumdrop' wall-frieze mentioned on the back cover, which is now quite scarce.

VARIANTS

With the publication of *Gumdrop's Merry Christmas* in 1992, the hugely enjoyable series reached a total of 35 books. Confusingly, no fewer than seven 'Gumdrops' have also been issued by Stevens under variant titles. They are: *Gumdrop Posts a Letter* (published by Stevens as *Gumdrop and the Birthday Surprise*, 1986), *Gumdrop and Horace* (*Gumdrop and the Great Sausage Caper*, 1985), *Gumdrop in a Hurry* (*Gumdrop Beats the Clock*, 1986), *Gumdrop Goes Fishing* (*Gumdrop Floats Away*, 1985), *Gumdrop has a Tummy-Ache* (*Gumdrop Catches a Cold*, 1985), *Gumdrop is the Best Car* (*Gumdrop is the Best*, 1985), and finally *Gumdrop on the Farm* (*Gumdrop and the Farmyard Caper*, 1985).

The good news is that Biro is writing a new 'Gumdrop', his first for several years. Entitled *Gumdrop and the Martians*, it will be published by Hodder in November 1998. Meanwhile, the company are reissuing the books in new livery, the first four titles having appeared on 22nd October, and the next quartet due on 18th December.

Today, Val Biro lives quietly in the Sussex countryside, and still drives miles across country in the real Gumdrop to give readings at schools. "It's good to meet my public on these visits," he says, "and keep up to date with today's children, who seem to enjoy being at school so much more than I did in those far-off days — and they're a lot brighter too!"

On Biro's seventieth birthday in 1991, Blackie published *Rub-a-Dub-Dub: Val Biro's*

77 *Favourite Nursery Rhymes*. "It contains them all from Little Jack Horner to Old King Cole and I loved doing the pictures." These were as timeless as the rhymes themselves — or even, one might say, as timeless and enduring as Gumdrop himself has proven to be. Is it really more than a quarter of a century since the following words were written?

"There was a strange sight at the Red Lion one sunny morning in June. The vintage cars

had come to start their big rally of the year. Never was there such a collection of fine old cars. Each had a rally number fixed to it. Number 1 was an Alvis Duck-Back and Number 2 a Morris Bullnose. The model T Ford was Number Three . . . And then there was a blue car with a black hood and a brass horn. It was Number 9: an Austin Clifton Heavy Twelve-Four, vintage 1926, driven by Bill McArran. It was Gumdrop . . ."

VAL BIRO UK BIBLIOGRAPHY

A guide to current values of First Edition in
Fine condition without/with dustjackets.

'GUMDROP' BOOKS (prices for jacketed copies where applicable)

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L. SPRAGUE DE CAMP

GRAND MASTER OF FANTASY

BY RICHARD DALBY

The American writer, L. Sprague de Camp — who celebrates his ninetieth birthday this month — is one of the last great survivors from the Golden Age of fantasy and science fiction. The publication of his debut story in 1937 coincided with the first appearance of *The Hobbit*, and six decades later De Camp's best fantasies and planetary romances are now accepted as classics alongside the works of Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, George Macdonald and Edgar Rice Burroughs. His collaborator for much of his career has been his wife, Catherine Crook de Camp, who also celebrates her ninetieth birthday this month.

HUMORIST

De Camp's fantasies (notably *Lest Darkness Fall* and *Land of Unreason*) are written in a highly readable style, reminiscent of Edgar Rice Burroughs' planetary romances retold by P.G. Wodehouse. Thorne Smith, another humorist, was a major influence on De Camp.

De Camp was one of the 'three musketeers of science fiction', along with Robert A. Heinlein and Isaac Asimov. The trio spent the war years together at the Philadelphia Naval Yard, and remained close friends for the rest of their lives. De Camp is now the only survivor of this legendary triumvirate.

The genre of 'sword and sorcery' and heroic fantasy owes much to L. Sprague de Camp, who, throughout the 1960s and 1970s, organised all of Robert E. Howard's 'Conan' stories into a huge multi-volume saga of the hero's life, ensuring that Howard's *oeuvre* became universally popular. The subsequent blockbuster film, *Conan the Barbarian*, launched Arnold Schwarzenegger as a world superstar.

De Camp's prolific and complex bibliography contains not only over sixty volumes of



L. Sprague de Camp is the last survivor of the Golden Age of American fantasy and science fiction.

fiction, but also a wide range of scholarly non-fiction, focusing on archaeology, engineering and technology, pseudo-science, the craft of writing and literary biography. He remains one of fantasy literature's most versatile figures — a great entertainer, scholar and consummate professional.

Lyon Sprague de Camp was born in New York City on 27th November 1907. He inherited his unusual surname from a seventeenth-century French forebear, Laurent de Camp, who was named after his native village in Normandy. As the author recently explained: "The 'Sprague' rhymes with plague; while the 'De Camp' is pronounced like the verb 'decamp' . . . As a boy I hated my name, wishing I had something simple and manly like 'Jack' or

'Bill'. But when I got into writing, I found the name to have advantages. When people ask me what pen-names I write under, I reply: 'With a name like mine, who needs one?'

When he was a child, his mother regularly read him not only the standard children's tales of Carroll, Kingsley and Kipling, but also the stirring novels of Dumas and Hugo. *The Three Musketeers* and other tales of chivalry were special favourites. "As soon as I could read, I began to devour books as a hungry lion devours steaks," he recalls. "One book made a lasting impression: *The Red Fairy Book*, one of Andrew Lang's turn-of-the-century collections of folk tales [See BMC 81]. This volume is full of particularly gory North European stories, with severed heads bouncing and rolling about and wicked stepmothers made to dance in red-hot iron shoes until they fall dead. It gave me the horrors, but also, perhaps, a grounding in fantasy writing."

ENGINEERING

After attending schools in New York and North Carolina, De Camp went to the California Institute of Technology, Pasadena, where he studied aeronautical engineering, and then to the Stevens Institute of Technology, where he was awarded a master's degree in 1933. He then worked as an instructor for the Inventors Foundation Inc, which dealt chiefly with patenting. De Camp soon became a highly regarded expert in this field, retaining a special interest in aeronautical and naval engineering.

His first book, written in collaboration with Alf K. Berle and running to 733 pages, was *Inventions and Their Management*, published by the International Textbook Company in 1937. This standard work remained in print for several decades, and was reprinted in 1947 and 1951. It was further revised in 1959 for the fourth edition (entitled *Inventions, Patents and Their Management*), which was published by Van Nostrand.

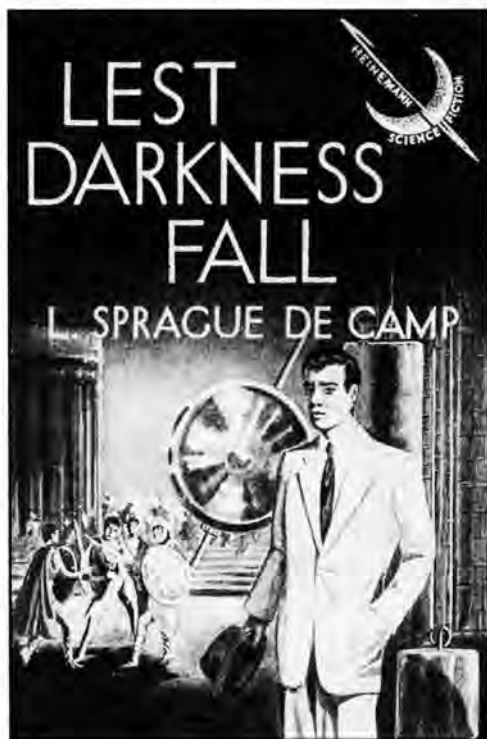
De Camp now spent most of his spare time writing fantasy tales, and in September 1937 his first published story, 'The Isolinguals', appeared in the important pulp, *Astounding Stories*. This was shortly before John W. Campbell became editor of the magazine

and changed its name to *Astounding Science Fiction*.

De Camp blossomed under Campbell's enthusiastic encouragement, writing prolifically for both ASF and its fantasy companion, *Unknown*, and soon becoming a central figure of America's Golden Age of science fiction. Among his best stories for ASF were a four-part series about Johnny Black, an intelligent talking bear who saves the world (in 'The Command', 1938), and 'Divide and Rule', in which the Earth has been invaded by alien 'hoppers' who reinstate a feudal chivalric code.

Apart from his fantasies, De Camp wrote several non-fiction articles on strange organisms and inventions for Campbell's magazines. Reminiscing about these pieces, De Camp recently observed: "In 'Design For Life', on the engineering limitations of living organisms, I think I may have been the first to

The Heinemann edition of Lest Darkness Fall. This was the first of De Camp's books to appear in the U.K.



write of creatures from other planets as 'extra-terrestrials' or ETs, that is to use extraterrestrial (as we spell it today) as a noun. I understand that H.G. Wells was ahead of me with the adjective."

Unknown, founded in March 1939 (with a great first issue featuring Eric Frank Russell's novel, *Sinister Barrier*), became one of the most popular, unusual and collectable of all U.S. pulp magazines. De Camp quickly established himself as a regular contributor, his humorous stories typifying *Unknown's* wacky approach to adult fantasy. He helped to define what became known as the "*Unknown* school of fantasy", characterised by a logical and often humorous approach to the outlandish and supernatural.

Among the most memorable of De Camp's early contributions to the magazine's were 'The Gnarly Man' (June 1939; about an immortal Neanderthal found working in a

circus sideshow), 'Nothing in the Rules' (July 1939; about a man who enters a mermaid at a swimming contest), 'Lest Darkness Fall' (December 1939), 'The Wheels of If' (October 1940; alternative history), 'None But Lucifer' (with Horace L. Gold; about a young American taking a job in the Satanic hierarchy), and the first two 'Enchanter' tales, co-written with Fletcher Pratt.

FAIRY-TALE

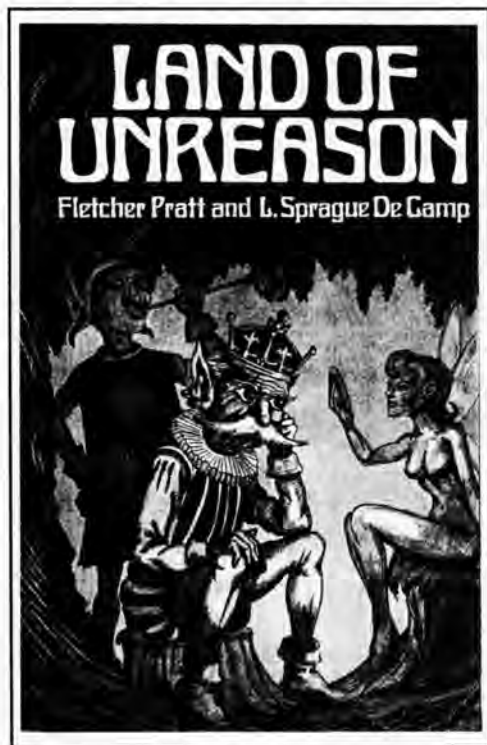
Also of note from 1942 are 'The Undesired Princess' (set in a strange fairy-tale world) and 'Solomon's Stone' (an accountant is forced out of his body and onto the astral plane by a demon). Many of these stories were later published in book form, under the titles *The Wheels of If* (1948), *The Undesired Princess* (1951), *Solomon's Stone* (1957) and *The Best of L. Sprague de Camp* (1978).

Ultimately, De Camp's most enduring work from this period is the novel, 'Lest Darkness Fall', in which a young American scientist, Martin Padway, finds himself in sixth-century Rome and attempts to prevent the onset of the Dark Ages by inventing gadgets to keep the barbarians at bay. This was the first notable piece of historical fiction to appear in a U.S. science fiction magazine, and was brilliant both in its characterisation and its depiction of post-Imperial Rome.

'Lest Darkness Fall' appeared in the December 1939 edition of *Unknown*, with splendid illustrations by Ed Cartier. The editor, John W. Campbell, cut De Camp's text to make the story fit the space available, and also excised all passages that dealt, however gingerly, with sex. "Campbell was as straitlaced about sex in his magazines as any Victorian editor," De Camp later observed. This novel is far superior to the usual run of 1930s and 1940s pulp fiction — a fact recognised by the important New York publisher, Henry Holt & Co, when they took the unusual step of publishing it in book form.

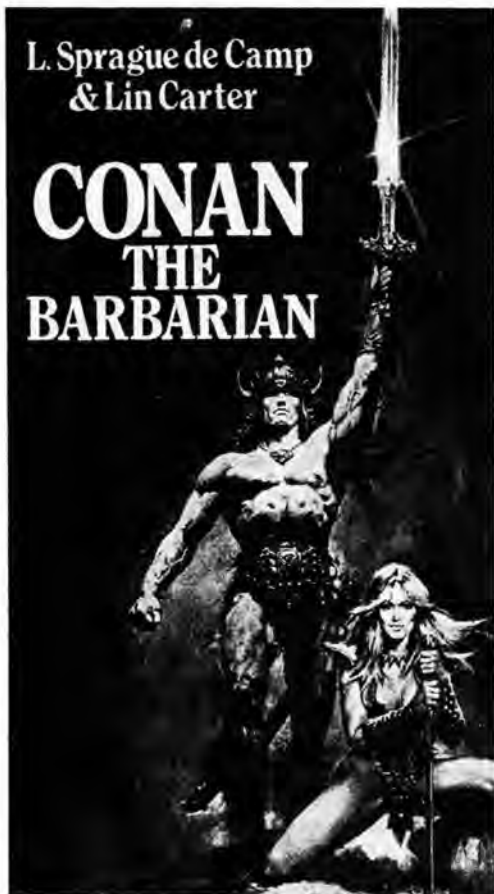
William Sloane, Holt's leading editor, was a connoisseur of imaginative fiction, and had himself written two distinguished novels in the genre: *The Edge of Running Water* and *To Walk the Night*. Sloane persuaded Holt to publish a series of fantasy and science fiction

The British edition of Land of Unreason (1972) features a fine jacket illustration by David L. Fletcher.



L. Sprague de Camp
& Lin Carter

CONAN THE BARBARIAN



De Camp worked on several titles in the 'Conan' saga, and co-wrote the novelisation of the 1982 movie.

novels, beginning with *Lest Darkness Fall*, which appeared in 1941, fortunately with all the passages that Campbell had deleted now restored for posterity.

The excellent response to *Lest Darkness Fall* prompted Holt to publish two more superb fantasy novels from the pages of *Unknown* — *The Incomplete Enchanter* (1941) and *Land of Unreason* (1942). These were the earliest collaborations between De Camp and Fletcher Pratt (1897-1956), a popular historian and science fiction writer whom the author had first met in 1939.

De Camp would usually write the first draft of each story after he and Pratt had jointly worked out the plot outlines. Pratt then

prepared a second draft, to which De Camp would make slight revisions, subject to his partner's agreement.

'Land of Unreason', which first appeared in the October 1941 issue of *Unknown*, was immediately acclaimed as "a masterpiece of adult fantasy". This story describes the adventures of Fred Barber, an American diplomat convalescing in Yorkshire, who finds himself on Midsummer's Eve at the fairyland court of King Oberon. As the price of his freedom, he is entrusted with a difficult mission to the Kobold Hills, crossing forests and dangerous lands, meeting ogres and sprites, dryads and two-headed eagles on the way. Like all the Pratt/De Camp novels, 'Land of Unreason' is romantic, lyrical, hilarious and, in every sense, wonderful.

WARTIME

The Holt first edition can fetch up to £100 (although some specialist dealers will ask for more) in its splendid dustjacket designed by Boris Artzybasheff, the highly-regarded Russian-born artist best known for his wartime illustrations in *Life* and for countless cover paintings for *Time*. The U.K. edition (Tom Stacey, 1972) is also scarce, but much cheaper (£10-£15). It features an equally fine wraparound jacket by David L. Fletcher.

Pratt and De Camp achieved equal success with their 'Incomplete Enchanter' series, in which a psychologist, Harold Shea, is transported into various alternative worlds derived from myths and literary classics. In the first two novellas, 'The Roaring Trumpet' and 'The Mathematics of Magic' — collected as *The Incomplete Enchanter* (Holt, 1941) — Shea visits the worlds of the Norse gods and Spenser's *Fairie Queene*. As with *Land of Unreason*, the first edition has a wonderful dustjacket by Artzybasheff, and is worth around £100 today in Very Good condition.

The next 'Shea' novel, 'The Castle of Iron', takes him to the world of Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*. Though published in *Unknown* in 1941, it did not appear in book form until 1950.

On 12th August 1939, De Camp married the writer, Catherine Crook. She has been a lifelong soulmate and frequent collaborator, sharing all of her husband's interests and

particularly his love of the fantasy genre. They have two sons, Lyman Sprague and Gerard Beekman.

De Camp joined the U.S. Naval Reserve in 1942 and spent the remainder of the war working on defence projects in the Philadelphia Naval Yard alongside Isaac Asimov (see BMC 33) and Robert A. Heinlein (see BMC 65). Following his promotion to the rank of lieutenant commander, De Camp was commissioned to write a technical study on *The Evolution of Naval Weapons*, which was published by the Naval Department in 1947.

The post-war years saw renewed interest in science fiction and the growth of several high-quality American presses. In 1948, two of these presses published collections of De Camp's best short stories from *ASF* and *Unknown*. These books were *Divide and Rule* (Fantasy Press) and *The Wheels of If* (Shasta), each of which fetches £40-£60 with the dustjacket, or £15-£20 without. As ever with science fiction and fantasy first editions of this era, dustjackets are essential for collectors, especially when they are designed by top illustrators. For example, all of the early Shasta titles, including *The Wheels of If* and John W. Campbell's *Who Goes There?* (later memorably filmed as *The Thing*), feature superb jackets by Hannes Bok, one of the genre's greatest artists. The success of these collections encouraged De Camp — following a protracted respite — to contribute further novels and short stories to *ASF* and other important fantasy magazines.

FUTURE

'The Animal Cracker Plot' (1949) launched De Camp's amazing 'Viagens Interplanetarias' series, which constitutes his single largest body of work. These stories are set in a future where Brazil has become the dominant world power, so that Portuguese is the language of space travel. Most of the action takes place on three worlds which circle the star Tau Ceti. These are named after Hindu gods: Krishna, Ganesha and Vishnu. Among the other planets in this fantastic galaxy are Isis, Osiris and Thoth. The best short stories in this series were collected in 1953 as *The Continent Makers and Other Tales of the Viagens*.

Arguably the most notable 'Viagens' story is *Rogue Queen* (1951), which features a rigid matriarchy based on a beehive structure. This remains De Camp's most highly regarded science fiction novel after *Lest Darkness Fall*.

Most later stories in this series were set on the planet of Krishna, a barbarian world which gave ample scope to De Camp's vivid imagination. All of these works featured a name beginning with 'Z' in their titles.

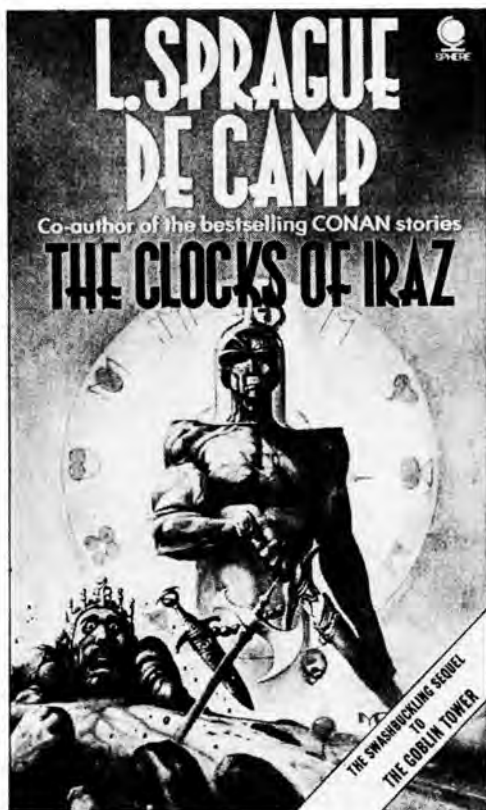
'The Queen of Zamba' first appeared in *ASF* in 1949, and was subsequently retitled for both the U.S. (*Cosmic Manhunt*; Ace, 1954) and U.K. (*A Planet Called Krishna*; Compact, 1966) book editions. In 1977, the definitive text was reissued in America under the original title, along with another De Camp story, 'Perpetual Motion'.

HALVES

'The Hand of Zei' followed next in *ASF* (1950), but this novel was later published in two halves by Avalon as *The Search For Zei* (1962) and *The Hand of Zei* (1963). To complicate matters further, the U.K. edition of *The Search For Zei* was retitled *The Floating Continent* (Compact, 1966). The complete text was thankfully reprinted in the omnibus collection, *The Hand of Zei* (Owlswick Press, 1981). Further 'Krishna' novels were *The Tower of Zanid* (1958), *The Hostage of Zir* (1977), *The Prisoner of Zhamanak* (1982), *The Bones of Zora* (1984) and *The Swords of Zinjaban* (1991). The last two were collaborations between De Camp and his wife, Catherine.

De Camp was always an ardent fan of Robert E. Howard (see BMC 111), in particular his stories featuring Conan the Barbarian and Kull the Conqueror. In the early 1950s, he himself turned to the world of 'sword and sorcery' with his 'Pusadian' stories, which were subsequently collected as *The Tritonian Ring and Other Pusadian Tales* (Twayne, U.S., 1953). This collection has never appeared in the U.K., although Sphere published a paperback edition of the title novel in 1978.

On the strength of these tales, De Camp became closely involved with the revival of the complete 'Conan' stories, which were reissued in a series of attractive hardbacks by the Gnome Press.



The Clocks of Iraz and *The Unbeheaded King* are both set in the imaginary world of Novaria, and — with *The Goblin Tower* — make up the 'Jorian' trilogy. These are the British editions, both of them paperback originals. The three novels were collected in a hardback omnibus, *The Reluctant King*, issued in the U.S. in 1985.

When the publishers received several unfinished manuscripts from Howard's estate, they commissioned "one of the outstanding men in SF to complete the book — L. Sprague de Camp, no less!" The four stories in *Tales of Conan* (1955) were originally intended to be oriental adventure tales with both medieval and modern settings. Converting them into 'Conan' stories involved the changing of names, the removal of anachronisms and the addition of a supernatural element. De Camp did his best to include all the heady atmosphere, action, eeriness and fantastic quality of the 1930s originals, but was never quite able to imitate Howard's own uniquely dark and psychotic style. He was always happier with humorous fantasy or planetary romance

blended with sword and sorcery — intense weird horror (as mastered by H.P. Lovecraft and Stephen King) was never his forte.

After *Tales of Conan*, De Camp revised a pastiche written by Björn Nyberg, *The Return of Conan* (1957). Most of these Gnome Press first editions now fetch between £40 and £80 in their dustjackets, the values depending on how badly the paper has browned. The highest prices are obtained for those relatively few copies with reasonably pristine, white pages.

After a short gap, De Camp collaborated (usually with Lin Carter) on thirteen further 'Conan' volumes (five novels and eight collections of short stories), of which seven were loosely based on Howard's unfinished manuscripts and fragments. These were all

published in paperback only (most with stunning cover paintings by Frank Frazetta) in the U.S. by Lancer (1966-1971), Ace and Bantam, and in the U.K. by Sphere (including no fewer than nine titles in 1974 alone).

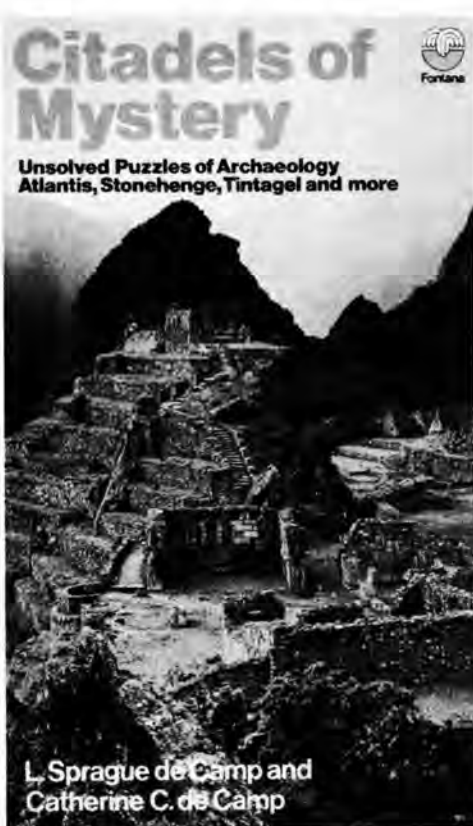
In 1980, De Camp wrote his only solo 'Conan' novel, *Conan and the Spider God* (U.S., 1980), before collaborating with Lin Carter on the novelisation of *Conan the Barbarian*, the film which launched Arnold Schwarzenegger to superstardom in 1982. Following the success of this movie (on which De Camp served as 'technical advisor'), these two titles were issued in hardback editions by the British publisher, Robert Hale.

ESSAYS

Around the same time as this great outpouring of 'Conan' fiction, De Camp also wrote several essays on the character for the fanzine, *Amra*, which were subsequently collected in *The Conan Reader* (1968). This book featured a fine dustjacket by Berni Wrightson — this famous illustrator's first professional sale. With George H. Scithers, De Camp then co-edited two similar volumes, featuring essays by various contributors: *The Conan Swordbook: 27 Examinations of Heroic Fiction* (1969) and *The Conan Grimoire* (1972). These three titles were all published by the Mirage Press.

De Camp also edited three 'sword and sorcery' anthologies for Pyramid: *Swords and Sorcery* (1963), *The Spell of Seven* (1965) and *The Fantastic Swordsmen* (1967). These were followed by *Warlocks and Warriors* (1970).

In the same genre, De Camp wrote another series of popular novels set in the



Citadels of Mystery is a survey of several 'magical' archaeological sites, including Stonehenge and Tintagel.

imaginary world of Novaria. These were: *The Goblin Tower* (1968), *The Clocks of Iraz* (1971), *The Fallible Fiend* (1973), *The Unbeheaded King* (1983) and *The Honorable Barbarian* (1989). The first, second and fourth novels — comprising the 'Jorian' trilogy — were subsequently collected in an omnibus edition entitled *The Reluctant King* (1985). The *Washington Post* reviewer described the concluding story as "a richly comic work that on one hand fulfils every requirement of the formulaic cutesy fantasy, and on the other satirises it mercilessly and outrageously". The same could be said for all De Camp's fantasy novels.

De Camp and Fletcher Pratt continued the adventures of Harold Shea in 'The Wall of Serpents' (*Fantasy Fiction*, 1953), drawing on the mythology of the Finnish epic, *The Kalevala*,

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and *The Green Magician*, set in the Ireland of Cuchulain. These two novellas were collected in *The Wall of Serpents* (Avalon, U.S., 1960), which was published in Britain twenty years later as *The Enchanter Completed*.

For those collectors who find the three 'Shea' volumes (*The Incomplete Enchanter*, *The Castle of Iron* and *The Wall of Serpents*) difficult — and expensive — to track down, there is a much cheaper and more readily-available alternative: the three-in-one paperback omnibus, *Intrepid Enchanter: The Complete Magical Misadventures of Harold Shea* (1988).

After an interval of more than three decades, De Camp made further additions to the 'Enchanter' canon: the novella, *Sir Harold and the Gnome King* (Wildside Press, 1991 — available as a trade paperback and in three signed, limited editions); and two collaborations with Christopher Stasheff: *The Enchanter Reborn* (1992) and *The Exotic Enchanter* (1995).

Another successful Pratt/De Camp collaboration was the series of 'Gavagan's Bar' tales, written in the manner of Lord Dunsany's 'Jorkens' stories (see BMC 122), with each fantastic yarn told by one of the bar's regular customers. A collection of 23 of these *Tales from Gavagan's Bar* was published by Twayne in 1953, and an 'expanded edition' totalling 29 stories appeared in 1978 from the Owlswick Press, with illustrations by Inga Pratt and Tim Kirk.

Among De Camp's best fantasy and science fiction tales of the 1950s are 'Aristotle and the Gun', 'A Gun for Dinosaur' and 'A Thing of Custom', collected in the Doubleday hardback, *A Gun for Dinosaur and Other Imaginative Tales* (1967).

The most ingenious of his later novels is probably *The Great Fetish* (Doubleday, 1978), which features a schoolteacher hero on a lost colony of Earth. It is highly satirical and enormously readable, like so many of De Camp's richly enjoyable tales.

The Purple Pterodactyls (1979) relates the adventures of "ensorcelled financier", W. Wilson Newbury — again, told somewhat in the vein of Dunsany's 'Jorkens' stories. Like Harold Shea, Martin Padway and several other De Camp heroes, Newbury has many qualities in common with the author.

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LOVECRAFT

A Biography

L. SPRAGUE DE CAMP



De Camp admires the works of H.P. Lovecraft, and wrote this biography of the author in the mid-1970s.

As well as his early books on inventions and naval weapons, De Camp has written many other important and fascinating non-fiction works, sometimes in collaboration with his wife and other experts. Notable amongst these is the much-acclaimed *Lands Beyond* (with Willy Ley; U.S., 1952; U.K., 1954), an historical account of discoveries and exploration which won the non-fiction category of the International Fantasy Award in 1953. Related works are *Lost Continents: The Atlantis Theme in History, Science and Literature* (U.S., 1954) and *Ancient Ruins and Archaeology* (with Catherine C. de Camp; U.S., 1964; U.K., 1965; retitled *Citadels of Mystery* for the 1972 Fontana edition), which looks at unsolved historical puzzles from Stonehenge to Tintagel. Using his extensive knowledge of engineering, De Camp also produced three Golden Press volumes on *Engines: Man's Use of Power from the Water Wheel to the Atomic Pile*

(1959), *Man and Power* (1961) and *Energy and Power* (1962), all of them finely illustrated in full colour by Jack Coggins.

Whilst writing five scrupulously-researched historical novels for Doubleday (beginning with *An Elephant for Aristotle* and *The Bronze Gods of Rhodes*), he was commissioned by the same publisher to write definitive studies of *The Heroic Age of American Invention* (1961), *The Ancient Engineers* (1963), *The Day of the Dinosaur* (1968), *The Great Monkey Trial* (1968) and *Great Cities of the Ancient World* (1972).

His pioneering 328-page *Science Fiction Handbook: The Writing of Imaginative Fiction* was published by the Hermitage Press in 1953 (as part of the 'Professional Writers Library' series), and was then later updated (although omitting some of the earlier material) in collaboration with his wife in 1975.

De Camp has subsequently written many articles on the genre, notably a series in *Fantastic Stories* which began with a literary sketch of Robert E. Howard — 'Skald in the Post Oaks' — in the June 1971 issue. His original essay was cut to half its original length by the editor, but the full manuscript was later published separately as *The Miscast Barbarian* (1975). It was then rewritten for *Literary Swordsmen and Sorcerers* (Arkham House, 1976), a collection of essays based on the magazine series.

Another of these essays, 'Eldritch Yankee Gentleman: H.P. Lovecraft' — first printed in the August and October 1971 issues of *Fantastic Stories* — formed the basis of De Camp's 510-page study, *Lovecraft: A Biography* (Doubleday, U.S., 1975; New English Library, 1976). His short Robert E. Howard biography was similarly expanded (in collaboration with Jane Whittington Griffin and Catherine Crook de Camp) and published as *Dark Valley Destiny: The Life of Robert E. Howard* by Bluejay Books in 1983.

An earlier and highly prized Arkham House title by De Camp was his first collection of poetry, *Demons and Dinosaurs* (1971). Only 500 copies were printed, and these sold out immediately. Published at \$4, this title can now fetch up to £150 in the superb dustjacket designed by Frank Utpatel.

His only other collections of fantasy verse — *Phantoms and Fancies* (Mirage Press, 1972; limited to 1,000 copies) and *Heroes and Hobgoblins* (Donald M. Grant, 1981; limited to 1,250 signed copies), both illustrated by Tim Kirk — are curiously undervalued at around £15 each. However, these prices are bound to rise steeply in the near future. The latter is still in print at \$25.

MISCELLANIES

Also very reasonably priced are two limited edition 'miscellanies': *Scribblings* (1972; 500 numbered copies), comprising mainly essays, together with a few poems and very short tales; and *Footprints on Sand: A Literary Sampler* (1981; 1,500 copies, of which 500 are signed by De Camp and his wife).

L. Sprague de Camp's eagerly awaited autobiography, *Time and Chance*, was published by Donald M. Grant last year. This long (444 pages, with 64 photographs) and fascinating chronicle is obviously essential reading for all admirers of this greatly respected author. It describes his upbringing and his distinguished literary career, and also

details his friendships with virtually every author active in the fantasy field since the 1930s.

De Camp speaks several languages and has travelled widely in search of material for his books. He has been chased by a hippopotamus in Uganda and by sea lions in the Galapagos Islands, and has visited the great pyramids at Giza during a moonlit sandstorm. He recently spent Easter on Easter island whilst researching his latest non-fiction book, *The Ape-Man Within*. These, and many more incidents, are related in his marvellous autobiography, which was quite rightly nominated for the Hugo Non-Fiction Award.

He has received several more honours during his illustrious career, including the 'Gandalf' Grand Master Award at the World Science Fiction Convention in 1976, and the Lifetime Achievement Award at the 1984 World Fantasy Convention. These are surely fitting tributes to a man who has devoted his long life to the field of imaginative fiction.

Thanks to Peter Relton for checking the bibliography and price guide.

L. SPRAGUE DE CAMP US/UK BIBLIOGRAPHY

A guide to current values of first editions in Very Good (pre-1960) to Fine condition without/with dustjackets.

FANTASY NOVELS

LEST DARKNESS FALL (Holt, U.S., 1941)	£20-£30 (£75-£100)
ditto (Heinemann, 1955)	£6-£10 (£15-£20)
GENUS HOMO (with P. Schuyler Miller) (Fantasy Press, U.S., 1950)	£15-£20 (£40-£60)
THE UNDESIRE PRINCESS (Fantasy Press, U.S., 1951)	£15-£20 (£40-£60)
ROGUE QUEEN (Doubleday, U.S., 1951)	£10-£15 (£30-£40)
ditto (paperback) (Pinnacle, 1954)	£4-£6
COSMIC MANHUNT (paperback) (Ace, U.S., 1954)	£4-£6
ditto (as 'A Planet called Krishna') (paperback) (Compact, 1966)	£4-£6
ditto (as 'The Queen of Zamba'; revised text; paperback) (Davis, U.S., 1977)	£6-£10
SOLOMON'S STONE (Avalon, U.S., 1957)	£10-£15 (£30-£40)
THE TOWER OF ZANID (Avalon, U.S., 1958)	£10-£15 (£30-£40)
THE GLORY THAT WAS (Avalon, U.S., 1960)	£10-£15 (£30-£40)
THE SEARCH FOR ZEI (Avalon, U.S., 1962)	£10-£15 (£30-£40)
ditto (as 'The Floating Continent') (paperback) (Compact, 1966)	£3-£5
THE HAND OF ZEI (Avalon, U.S., 1963)	£10-£15 (£30-£40)
THE HAND OF ZEI (omnibus; contains complete texts of 'The Search for Zei' and 'The Hand of Zei') (Owlswick Press, U.S., 1981)	£10-£15
THE GOBLIN TOWER (paperback) (Pyramid, U.S., 1968)	£2-£3
ditto (paperback) (Sphere, 1979)	£1-£2
THE CLOCKS OF IRAZ (paperback) (Pyramid, U.S., 1971)	£2-£3
ditto (paperback) (Sphere, 1979)	£1-£2
THE UNBEHEADED KING (Del Rey, U.S., 1983)	£4-£6 (£8-£10)
ditto (paperback) (Grafton, 1988)	£1-£2
THE RELUCTANT KING (omnibus containing the three 'Jorian' novels: 'The Goblin Tower', 'The Clocks of Iraz' and 'The Unbeheaded King') (Nelson Doubleday, U.S., 1985)	£4-£6 (£8-£10)

Bibliography continued overleaf

L. SPRAGUE DE CAMP bibliography continued from previous page

THE FALLIBLE FIEND (paperback) (New American Library, U.S., 1973)	£2-£3
ditto (Remploy, 1974)	£3-£5
ditto (paperback) (Sphere, 1978)	£1-£2
THE HOSTAGE OF ZIR (Berkley/Putnam, U.S., 1977)	£4-£6 (£8-£10)
THE GREAT FETISH (Doubleday, U.S., 1978)	£4-£6 (£8-£10)
THE TRITONIAN RING (paperback) (Sphere, 1978)	£1-£2
THE PRISONER OF ZHAMANAK (Phantasia Press, U.S., 1982)	£5-£8 (£10-£15)
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ROTHMANS FOOTBALL YEARBOOK

THE FOOTBALL FAN'S 'BIBLE'
IS BECOMING INCREASINGLY COLLECTABLE

BY RICHARD COLBEY

Whenver football fans have an argument about an aspect of the game's history, they will invariably resort to *Rothmans Football Yearbook*. This work is regarded as the last word on virtually every facet of the game. Indeed, if asked, most fans would assume that the *Yearbook* has been around for "donkey's years". In fact, it was not launched until the start of the 1970/71 season.

It was a collaboration between three organisations: the publishers, Queen Anne Press (who sold the title to Headline in 1992); the Bagnell Harvey organisation, a sports agency who represented Denis Compton, amongst others; and the Rothmans tobacco company. They were supported by a group of footballing dignitaries who agreed to form the original Editorial Advisory Board.

PUBLICITY

It remains to be seen whether or not Rothmans' association with the work will continue if the government implements its threat to ban tobacco advertising. It would certainly be a blow for the company if they *did* have to withdraw, as they gain a great deal of publicity from the *Yearbook*. Indeed, it has been so successful that it is now perhaps better known than its sponsor's product. The current executive editor, Jack Rollin, rejoices in tales of people asking for "Rothmans" in W.H. Smith and being directed to the sports section rather than the cigarette counter!

Initially the book did not have editors, merely 'compilers'. There were two for the first edition: Tony Williams and Roy Peskett. They were assisted by an Editorial Board

Rothmans Football Yearbook 1970-71



All the essential facts and figures of the World's most popular game 992 pages 32 pages of illustrations

18s

The first Rothmans Football Yearbook covered the 1970/71 season. Fine copies now sell for up to £75.

containing, amongst others, Sir Matt Busby and Denis Howell MP, Shadow Minister (and later Minister) for Sport. As if these eminent names weren't enough, there was an 'Advisory Panel' of nineteen football and media figures, including Bobby Charlton, Tom Finney and Joe Mercer. The involvement of such heavyweight advisers gives an

indication of the importance which the football establishment attached to the success of the work.

The layout of the *Yearbook* has hardly changed from the first edition. The book opens with a list of the English League clubs' performances in the previous season, followed by League tables and Cup results. A similar but smaller section is devoted to the Scottish Leagues. This is followed by the international section, detailing all the home countries' games in the previous year, as well as other major international matches. Attached to this section is a complete table of all players capped by a British or Irish national side. There is also a remarkably comprehensive section on the non-League game.

DESIGN

As with most good works of reference, the format, once established, has remained more or less constant. The most radical change to the design occurred with the 1995/96 edition, when the circular photo-frame on the cover was replaced by a rectangular collage. Photos within the book were confined to a central section until 1983, when they began to be distributed throughout the book. Even now, there are no colour photos except on the cover.

From the start, the *Yearbook* has been issued in both hard- and paperback, although the print-run for the bound copies has only ever been 5%-10% of that for the softcovers. All have laminated pictorial boards and matching dustjackets.

Before *Rothmans*, most football annuals were simple pocket books. While many of these were well compiled and entertaining, they did not have the space to provide comprehensive information. Some, like the *Playfair Football Annual* and the *News of the World Football Annual* (the oldest of them all, now in its 111th year), have continued to thrive. *Playfair* now has the same publisher and editor as *Rothmans*, and has become little more than a condensed version of the larger book.

After the initial success of the *Football Yearbook*, Rothmans launched equivalents for other sports, most notably rugby union (which



Bobby Moore was pictured in the Yearbook when he won a coveted Rothmans Football Award.

started in 1972) and rugby League (1981). The *Rothmans Yearbook* marque has also been applied less successfully to non-League football, snooker, and motor-cycle racing. In some ways the only work with which Rothmans can be seriously compared isn't a football book, but the greatest of all sporting annuals, *Wisden Cricketers' Almanac* (see BMC 3 & 111). Indeed, in the foreword to the first edition of *Rothmans*, FIFA president, Sir Stanley Rous, alluded to the fact that there had previously been no footballing work which could compare with that definitive guide to cricket.

In its comprehensiveness, at least, *Rothmans* is a worthy rival to *Wisden*. Every county League in England is covered, throwing up amusing little statistical quirks like the fact that Harrowby conceded 171 goals

Rothmans Football Yearbook 1974-75



5th YEAR

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in 1994/95 but still didn't finish bottom of the Hereward Sports United Counties League! The *Yearbook* branches out into even more esoteric competitions, such as the London's Legal League and Financial FA.

However, one area to which it does not give adequate coverage is women's football. This rapidly growing part of the English game was not mentioned at all until 1991/92. It still only rates three pages, about 0.3% of the book's space, which is completely disproportionate to the number playing and following the women's game. Even the 1995 World Championship, which was extensively covered in the British press, only merited a single page.

Men's football outside Britain is given a reasonable amount of coverage. Every European League's top division is listed, although little is said about the star players. A

guide to key personnel would be of help, not only to fans, but to professional managers considering going on a 'shopping spree' for foreign talent.

Coverage of the game outside Europe consists of nothing more than a list of the various football associations. The Leagues of even great footballing nations like Brazil and Argentina have not been mentioned at all since 1989/90, and even during the early 1980s, when there *was* more international coverage in the book, a disproportionate amount of space was given over to the ill-fated North American Soccer League, rather than to the world's major competitions.

On the credit side, the *Yearbook* includes a list of every current English League player, complete with heights and weights (how on earth do they find these out?) and dates of birth. In addition, all previous clubs are detailed, although — infuriatingly — no



*Such is the *Yearbooks'* fame that it featured in this *Express* cartoon lampooning players' hairdos.*

dates are given. There are many annoying omissions of this sort but, despite frequent criticism, sometimes from professional football writers, little is done to remedy the situation.

The early editions were notable for the entertaining non-statistical features which they contained. For instance, every year the publishers conducted a poll of football writers to pick the best team from all the home countries. The line-up in the first edition will inevitably bring back fond memories for all fans over the age of 35: Banks, England, Moore, Hay, Cooper, Bremner, Ball, Johnstone, Best, Hurst and (Ron) Davies. However, most people seeing a fantasy team immediately try to pick a better one. For those so inclined, players who just missed out on 'selection' included Martin Peters, Billy McNeil, Francis Lee, Bobby Charlton (well past his best by then), Peter Osgood, Johnny Giles and Alan Mullery.

AWARDS

This enjoyable piece of frivolity was discontinued after the fifth edition, to be revived in the 1996/97 *Yearbook*. It was replaced by the Rothmans Football Awards, given to the six players who were thought to "have made a worthwhile contribution to the wide spectrum of the game". Amongst the first winners was Dickie Guy of Wimbledon, who had saved a penalty against Leeds to force a cup replay. The Dons were still then a non-League club, from an area, *Rothmans* noted, that meant little more than Wombles to most people. Eleven years later, another Wimbledon man, Dave Bassett, was to win an

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ROTHMANS FOOTBALL YEARBOOK 1987-88

Editor: Peter Dunk



18th YEAR

The Yearbook enjoyed its most successful period in the late 1980s, under the controversial Peter Dunk.

award for guiding the club to promotion to the first division.

The awards have continued ever since in much the same form. However, the twentieth edition (1989/90) included a team made up of the 'best' players from the preceding two decades. The line-up was: Banks, McGrain, Moore, Hansen, Sansom, Souness, Charlton, Robson, Dalglish, Rush and Best.

Of course, throughout that period there were several events in the footballing world that could *not* be treated with frivolity, above all the tragedies of Bradford, Heysel and Hillsborough. Bizarrely, the Bradford fire, in which 33 supporters died, was completely ignored. The crushing of 49 (mostly Italian) fans at the European Cup final in Brussels later the same year was given a somewhat eccentric analysis in the following season's *Rothmans*, more of which later. Only the Hillsborough disaster, in which 99 people died,

received an appropriate response from the *Yearbook*.

At the same time, little deference is shown to the history of the game. A full obituary section wasn't included until 1989/90, an omission which greatly detracted from the authoritativeness of the *Yearbook*.

By the third edition, Leslie Vernon and Jack Rollin had taken over the task of compiling the book. Rollin has proved to be a mainstay of the *Yearbook*, returning to the editorship for the 1988/89 edition. He handed over the reins to his daughter, Glenda, in 1996, but remains as executive editor. In 1979/80, the tenth anniversary edition, Rollin became the first person to acquire the title of editor, although he and Vernon remained as joint compilers.

The Advisory Panel disappeared without any explanation in the following edition. Tony Williams, who since his initial involvement

ROTHMANS FOOTBALL YEARBOOK 1997-98

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Executive Editor: Jack Rollin

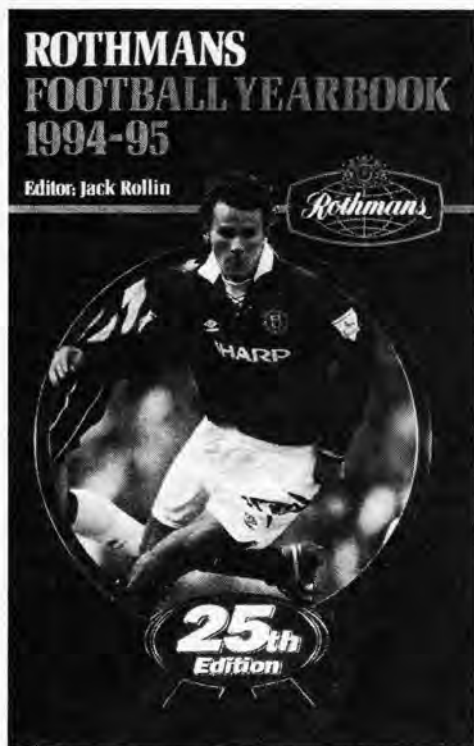


From the 1995/96 edition, the traditional circular cover photo was replaced by a rectangular collage.

had been an intermittent member of the panel, representing the Rothmans company, took over as editor for the 1983/84 edition. His major contribution to the work was the introduction of a team photo for all the 92 League clubs.

The next four editions were edited by Peter Dunk, who did away with the Editorial Board. In many ways, Dunk's editorship was the most successful period for the *Yearbook*. He had previously been a 'house editor' for the title, and came closer than anyone before or since to giving the book a logical layout.

Surprisingly perhaps for someone who had been an administrator rather than a journalist, Dunk was also the most controversial editor. Some of what he said may not have been appropriate in a work of record, but it certainly made for more entertaining reading than the bland introductions penned by his predecessors. For instance, in the aftermath of



Manchester United star, Ryan Giggs, was pictured on the cover of the 25th edition of the *Yearbook*.

the Heysel tragedy, he talked of the "cowardly police force" which had failed to control the crowd. His description of Colombia, the original host for the 1986 World Cup finals, as a "nasty little country" and "a banana republic" was notable, not just for its lack of diplomacy, but for its geographical and economic inaccuracy. However, his assertion in the same edition (1986/7) that Diego Maradona should have been suspended for his "hand of God" goal against England was one that many readers would have agreed with — even if they felt that he'd gone a bit too far likening FIFA secretary, Joao Havelange, to Mickey Mouse.

WORLD CUP

From the collector's point of view, a full set of *Rothmans* is a realistic aspiration (which is hardly the case with *Wisden*). The early editions are highly sought after, with Fine copies of the first (paperback) *Yearbook* selling for up to £75, but editions from the late

1970s/80s usually sell for £10-£15 (with those containing World Cup coverage fetching a slight premium), although they can sometimes be picked up for as little as £5. Hardback copies usually fetch around 25% more than the paperback equivalents, with jacketed copies selling at a slight premium. Bargain hunters should note that production has always been tightly controlled, and one rarely sees *Rothmans* remaindered — unlike *Wisden*, which can often be bought very cheaply when they are a year or so old.

Comparisons with *Wisden* are inevitable, so let me end with another one. Over the last decade, prices for the *Cricketers' Almanac* have increased dramatically. How long will it be before the same happens with that 'Bible' of our other national game: the *Rothmans Football Yearbook*?

The 'Rothmans Football Yearbook 1997/98' is currently on sale, price £17.99 (paperback) or £30 (hardback).

PRICE GUIDE TO 'ROTHMANS FOOTBALL YEARBOOK'

A guide to current values of books in Fine condition without/with dustjackets.

EDITION	SEASON	PAPERBACK	HARDBACK
1	1970/71	£50-£75	£75-£100 (£100-£125)
2	1971/72	£16-£18	£22-£24 (£26-£28)
3	1972/73	£18-£20	£24-£26 (£28-£30)
4	1973/74	£13-£15	£20-£22 (£24-£26)
5	1974/75	£15-£17	£22-£24 (£26-£28)
6	1975/76	£14-£16	£20-£22 (£24-£26)
7	1976/77	£10-£12	£14-£16 (£18-£20)
8	1977/78	£10-£12	£14-£16 (£18-£20)
9	1978/79	£14-£16	£20-£22 (£24-£26)
10	1979/80	£13-£15	£20-£22 (£24-£26)
11	1980/81	£14-£16	£20-£22 (£24-£26)
12	1981/82	£10-£12	£14-£16 (£18-£20)
13	1982/83	£12-£14	£16-£18 (£20-£22)
14	1983/84	£10-£12	£14-£16 (£18-£20)
15	1984/85	£14-£16	£20-£22 (£24-£26)
16	1985/86	£10-£12	£14-£16 (£18-£20)
17	1986/87	£13-£15	£20-£22 (£24-£26)
18	1987/88	£10-£12	£14-£16 (£18-£20)
19	1988/89	£10-£12	£14-£16 (£18-£20)
20	1989/90	£10-£12	£14-£16 (£18-£20)
21	1990/91	£16-£18	£22-£24 (£26-£28)
22	1991/92	£10-£12	£14-£16 (£18-£20)
23	1992/93	£10-£12	£14-£16 (£18-£20)
24	1993/94	£13-£15	£20-£22 (£24-£26)
25	1994/95	£16-£18	£22-£24 (£26-£28)
26	1995/96	£14-£16	£20-£22 (£24-£26)
27	1996/97	£13-£15	£20-£22 (£24-£26)

ANTHONY POWELL

AUTHOR OF 'A DANCE TO THE MUSIC OF TIME'

BY CRISPIN JACKSON

Anthony Powell is that rarest of things: a high-brow 'cult' author — one who has been successful, both critically and commercially, but not *that* successful. He has an impressive list of distinguished admirers — Kingsley Amis, Clive James, Sir John Betjeman — and yet has never enjoyed the vast sales and near universal popularity of his contemporaries, Evelyn Waugh and Graham Greene.

However, all that is likely to change with the transmission of Channel 4's adaptation of his best-known work, the twelve-novel sequence, 'A Dance to the Music of Time'. Various television companies have attempted to film the books over the last twenty years, only to be defeated by the sheer size of the undertaking. However, Channel 4 have sensibly decided to divide the saga into four two-hour films, each of which encompasses

three novels. The cast includes some very big names — Sir John Gielgud as the ageing novelist, St John Clarke; Edward Fox as the dreaded Uncle Giles; Alan Bennett as Sillery; and Miranda Richardson as Pamela Fleet — and the whole venture looks set to join *Brideshead Revisited* and *The Jewel in the Crown* in the pantheon of British TV classics.

In the four years since we last featured Powell in the magazine, he has entered the 'big league' in the field of modern first editions. Complete sets of 'Dance' turn up with increasing frequency at sales and in catalogues, while his pre-war novels are now extremely sought-after.

In this article, I want to range a bit further than we have in previous surveys. After a brief look at Powell's life, I shall take a look at current values



Anthony Powell chatting with Lady Antonia Fraser at the 1957 Chelsea Arts Ball. © Getty Images

of the first editions. I will then consider the options for those who are unable to find or afford the expensive firsts — or for those who simply want *every* new edition of the various titles. I shall then say a few words about Powell's style and achievements as a novelist.

Anthony Dymoke Powell was born in London on 21st December 1905, and was educated at Eton and Balliol College, Oxford. Between 1926 and 1936, he worked for Duckworth (who issued his first four novels), and he then spent a year as a scriptwriter for Warner Brothers. During the war, he served with the Welsh Regiment and the Army Intelligence Corps. He was Literary Editor of *Punch* from 1953 to 1958, and was chief book reviewer of *The Daily Telegraph* for many years.

SATIRE

Powell's literary career is divided into two parts: his pre-war output, which comprised five excellent satirical novels; and the 'Dance to the Music of Time' sequence. He has written a number of other works including two late novels, four volumes of memoirs and an outstanding biography of John Aubrey, but these are of secondary interest, both to scholars and collectors. His reputation rests on the novels which he produced between 1931 and 1975, and it is these which are most sought-after today.

This is particularly the case with the five pre-war titles: *Afternoon Men* (1931), *Venusberg* (1932), *From a View to a Death* (1933), *Agents and Patients* (1936) and *What's Become of Waring* (1939). Critics tend to dismiss these books as mere 'rehearsals' for the 'Dance' sequence, but that is to underrate them. There is no doubt that, had Powell not survived the war, these novels would still be in print — perhaps reissued by one of the smaller paperback publishers, but in print nevertheless. They focus on that fascinating territory that Powell has made his own: the social circles where 'the Establishment' and bohemia meet. Powell's heroes — like Nicholas Jenkins, the narrator of 'A Dance to the Music of Time' — tend to be middle/upper-middle class young men with intellectual/artistic interests and private incomes that are not quite large enough to spare them the burden of work.



*Powell's early novels are particularly sought-after. This signed copy of **Venusberg** sold for £2,530 last year.*

Afternoon Men satirises the world of the less-than-bright young things; *Venusberg* the diplomatic 'circuit'; *From a View to a Death*, the 'county set'. All the books are amusing rather than hilarious, and are very well crafted. All are completely free of *longueurs*, while never quite setting a cracking pace. They perhaps lack the virtuosity and 'colour' of Waugh's novels, but are nevertheless immensely readable. Fans of 'Dance' need not hesitate.

Having said that, they will almost certainly have to settle for reprints or paperback copies, as these five books are now amongst the legendary rarities of the Thirties, like the early Greenes and Eric Amblers. Last October, Christie's South Kensington offered an inscribed copy of *Venusberg* in the ultra-rare Misha Black dustjacket ("spine lightly browned, vertical crease to lower cover, head of spine a little chipped"). They estimated the book at £1,200-£1,800, but it fetched £2,530. The inscription was a good one ("For Tony Balston, in the hope that this book will make

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BRITISH COMICS (& Annuals) -

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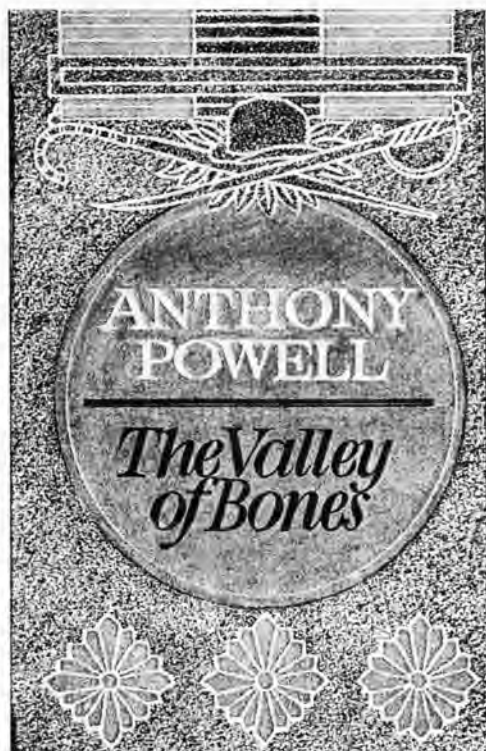
both our fortunes, from the author, publisher, and advertizer, Tony Powell, October 6th 1932"), but my guess is that an unsigned copy in an unbrowned and unchipped jacket would top £1,500.

Indeed, you would be lucky to get any of these pre-war first editions in a Very Good dustjacket for under £500, and even jacketless copies will fetch three-figure sums. Having said that, they are lovely books even without the jackets. I recently found a badly rebound copy of *Afternoon Men* in a library, and was struck by how beautifully produced it was: lovely type, and thick, creamy laid paper. Most collectors would be more than happy with such a book, and I would advise anyone who came across a jacketless copy (Very Good, in the original cloth binding) for less than £200 to snap it up.

WRITER'S BLOCK

In *The Valley of Bones*, Nicholas Jenkins admits to suffering writer's block as a result of the war, and something similar seems to have happened to Powell himself. A gap of twelve years separated *What's Become of Waring* and *A Question of Upbringing*, the first novel in the 'Dance' sequence — but, thereafter, he never looked back.

My advice to anyone who has not read Powell's *magnum opus* is to do so before they are bored to death by admirers of the series declaring, "What you've never read 'A Dance to the Music of Time'!" I suffered years of this, and finally relented — and thank goodness I did. First of all, I should explain why I delayed for so long. The simple truth is that, like so many people, I was put off by the 'tone' of the books — so mandarin and long-winded, so reminiscent of a privileged and narrow world that was not my own. Yes, the prose does at times rival Henry James at his most verbose (for instance, in the famous scene when Barbara Goring pours sugar over the head of the loathesome Widmerpool — although it is still very funny); yes, there are frequent suppers at the Ritz, and lots of characters with names like Buster and Tuffy. But the books are quite irresistible, and completely draw you into their world, whatever your circumstances or prejudices.



War and peace: *The Valley of Bones* (1964) and *Books Do Furnish a Room* (1971), respectively the seventh and tenth books in the 'Dance to the Music of Time' series. The first editions now sell for £30-£50 in Fine condition.

The series follows the narrator, Nicholas Jenkins, from school to middle age, in a career which closely resembles that of his creator. He works for an art publisher, and then a film studio; he publishes a few novels, and during the war serves first in a Welsh regiment and then the Intelligence Corps. Afterwards, he assists on a literary magazine.

If Jenkins is a somewhat bland (though likeable) narrator, he is partnered (to adopt the 'Dance' metaphor) by an army of hilarious acquaintances: tiresome Uncle Giles, a sort of human Eeyore; the marvellous General Conyers, whose vast range of sympathies encompasses the British Army, the music of Gounod, and psychoanalysis; the appalling guru, Dr Trelawney, who greets all strangers with the immortal line: "The Essence of the All is the Godhead of the True" (to which they are supposed to reply: "The Vision of Visions heals the Blindness of Sight");

and Captain Bithel, a drunken yarn-spinner ("brother of a VC... played rugby for Wales") of Homeric dimensions.

All twelve novels in the sequence were published by Heinemann. They are: *A Question of Upbringing* (1951), *A Buyer's Market* (1952), *The Acceptance World* (1955), *At Lady Molly's* (1957), *Casanova's Chinese Restaurant* (1960), *The Kindly Ones* (1962), *The Valley of Bones* (1964), *The Soldier's Art* (1966), *The Military Philosophers* (1968), *Books Do Furnish a Room* (1971), *Temporary Kings* (1973) and *Hearing Secret Harmonies* (1975). All these books were issued in matching, though to my eye rather dingy, dustjackets by Broom-Lynne.

Inevitably, the series' popularity snowballed as new novels appeared, which means that the later titles are much easier to find than the early ones. Condition is also a problem with the first two or three books and, whenever a complete set is offered, these



This complete set of all twelve 'Dance' novels sold for £1,610 at Christie's South Kensington last October.

titles tend to be noticeably tatterier than their partners. Two years ago, a copy of *A Question of Upbringing* in a "slightly clipped" dustjacket sold for £280 at Dominic Winter, and today a dealer might ask as much as £600 for a Fine example in the jacket, with upper limits of £400 and £300 respectively for the next two titles. Novels from the 1960s fetch between £30 and £75 in Fine condition, while the last three books can be bought for £20-£40 (see price guide).

Increasingly, dealers are tending to hold on to the books until they have a complete set. Nigel Williams recently offered one for £1,800, while Paul Foster's spring catalogue included a rebound set (half red calf) for £975. Another

set (with a damaged, third impression dustjacket on *A Buyer's Market*) sold for £1,610 at Christie's South Kensington last October. Amazingly, this was less than the sum achieved for a signed copy of Powell's 1934 verse 'fragment', *Caledonia*, which fetched £2,070. (Another signed copy sold for £1,495 at Sotheby's in July.) Also of interest from this auction was a proof copy of *The Soldier's Art*. This failed to sell (no estimate), but the catalogue notes that it came with a proof of the Broom-Lynne dustjacket — not always the case with these items.

For those who are reluctant to part with such hefty sums, there is a simple option — buy reprints. They feature the same dustjackets as the firsts, and can often be bought very cheaply, especially from libraries (quite acceptable if, like me, you prefer these books without the jackets). Happily, the success of *A Question of Upbringing* prompted Heinemann to reissue Powell's pre-war novels in matching bindings and jackets, and these shouldn't cost more than £10 in Very Good condition. The dates of these editions are: *Afternoon Men* (1952), *Venusberg* (1955), *From a View to a Death* (1954), *Agents and Patients* (1955) and *What's Become of Waring* (1953). The dustjacket of later impressions include

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the words, 'The Novels of Anthony Powell' — a somewhat superfluous addition, I should have thought.

And so, with a bit of patience, you should be able to build up a complete hardback collection of the aforementioned 'Novels of Anthony Powell' at a very reasonable price. Even cheaper are the paperback editions, although these are a bit of a mixed bunch. The first five novels were all issued by Penguin between 1961 and 1963: *Afternoon Men* (1963), *Venusberg* (1961), *From a View to a Death* (1961), *Agents and Patients* (1962) and *What's Become of Waring* (1962). For some reason, Penguin chose not to issue these in a uniform format. *Venusberg* has a 'full-page' cover illustration by Osbert Lancaster (as does *Afternoon Men*), whereas *From a View to a Death* — published in the same year — has the old-fashioned 'vertical band' livery (ditto *Waring*), and a wholly inappropriate cover picture by one Siriol Clarry.

Fortunately, Penguin opted for Lancaster when they began issuing the 'Dance' books in 1962, beginning with simultaneous paperback editions of the first three novels (nos 1728-30). Unfortunately, they lost the paperback rights to Fontana in 1968, dashing hopes of a paper-



Sir John Gielgud and Alan Bennett are amongst the stars of Channel 4's new four-part adaptation of 'A Dance to the Music of Time'.

back Lancaster set to rival the hardback Broom-Lynne originals. Like so many publishers at that time, Fontana opted for photographic covers, coming up with a series of 'still lives' which gave clues to the themes and characters encompassed in the various novels, in the manner of Broom-Lynne's original jacket designs. These have their charm, but tend towards the hideous. You only need compare Lancaster's last cover illustration (for *The Valley of Bones*) — a marvellously atmospheric sketch of a gloomy and windswept Castlemallock — to Fontana's 'photo-collage' alternative (a cigar-clenching set of false teeth on a pair of army boots) to appreciate the extent of the disaster.



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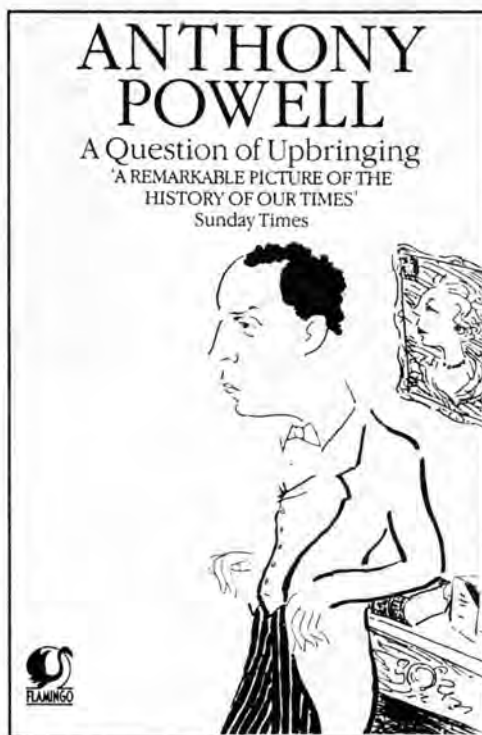
NEXT FAIR: 15TH NOVEMBER 1997

Moreover, these Fontana editions were very cheaply produced, and surviving copies tend to have loose (and yellowing) pages.

In the 1970s, Fontana commissioned a new set of cover illustrations from Marc Boxer, and most readers will be familiar with these. They work better in the original A-format paperbacks than in their subsequent B-format manifestation under the Flamingo imprint (introduced in 1983), but, regardless of cover size, they still seem to me much more reminiscent of the 1980s (Boxer used to edit *Tatler*) than the 1930s and '40s.

To tie in with the new films, Mandarin are reissuing the books in four paperback 'trilogies', whimsically linked to the seasons ('Spring' to 'Winter'). These are good value at £9.99, but unfortunately adopt the larger B-format, which makes them rather

Osbert Lancaster was the ideal artist to provide the cover illustrations for the Penguin editions of the novels.



Marc Boxer's cover illustrations for the later Flamingo paperbacks were distinctive but not quite so authentic.

cumbersome to carry around. I own a similar one-volume American edition of the first three books (again, given a seasonal label), and this is much more compact (though otherwise quite hideous). Needless to say, the covers of the new paperbacks feature stills from the Channel 4 series.

There is simply no substitute for reading the whole sequence, but for those who just want to sample its delights, then I recommend the sixth novel, *The Kindly Ones*. It covers a long time period — it begins with an extended episode from Jenkins' childhood (our first substantial glimpse of his pre-school career) and ends with his call-up for the war — but is more self-contained than most of the other books in the sequence. It also includes some quite hilarious scenes, many of them featuring the demented Dr Trelawney. His pontifications on the subject of the impending war with Germany merit quoting in full (and notice Powell's unobtrusiveness, which is

typical of his writing — he always lets his characters speak for themselves):

"What do you think, Dr Trelawney?"

'What will be, must be.'

'Which means war, in my opinion,' said Duport.

'The sword of Mithras, who each year immolates the sacred bull, will ere long now flash from its scabbard.'

'You've said it.'

'The slayer of Osiris once again demands his grievous tribute of blood. The Angel of Death will ride the storm.'

'Could this situation have been avoided?' I asked.

'The god, Mars, approaches the earth to lay waste. Moreover, the future is ever the consequence of the past.'

'And we ought to have knocked Hitler out when he first started making trouble?'

I remembered Ted Jeavons had held that view.

'The Four Horsemen are at the gate. The Kaiser went to war for shame of his withered arm. Hitler will go to war because at official receptions the tails of his evening coat sweep the floor like a clown's.'

'Seems like an inadequate reason,' said Duport.

'Such things are a paradox to the uninstructed — to the adept they are clear as morning light.'

'I must be one of the uninstructed,' said Duport."

Perhaps the most self-contained book is the follow-up, *The Valley of Bones*, which is a superb dissection of the tedium and comedy of army life, rivalling Waugh's *Sword of Honour* and Spike Milligan's hilarious war memoirs. However, because of its military setting, it is perhaps less representative of the whole than *The Kindly Ones*.

Powell's 'Dance to the Music of Time' is frequently criticised for its narrowness of scope, particularly on the social front. It is true that it doesn't present a complete picture of British society, but that was never Powell's intention. He wanted to demonstrate, not the diversity of a country or community, but the diversity of one man's experience in the course of three decades — the processes, less random than they at first appear, by which friends and relatives are separated and then reunited under very different circumstances. It is a great and moving work, its central philosophy perhaps best summed up by the doomed musicologist, MacIntick, in *Casanova's Chinese Restaurant*: "But anyway," he ponders, "it takes a bit of time to realise that all the odds and ends milling about round one are the process of living."

Anthony Powell bibliography overleaf.

'A Dance to the Music of Time' is broadcast on Channel 4 in four parts from the second week in October.

Minerva are publishing the novels in four paperback volumes on 16th October, price £9.99 each.

In Next Month's Issue

G.A. HENTY Major Sale Report

COLLECTING 'THE DANDY'

'Alms for Oblivion' Author SIMON RAVEN

RUMER GODDEN, Author of 'Black Narcissus'

Crime Writer LIZA CODY

THE FOLIO SOCIETY

ANTHONY POWELL UK BIBLIOGRAPHY

A guide to current values of first editions in Fine condition without/with dustjackets.

'A DANCE TO THE MUSIC OF TIME'

A QUESTION OF UPBRINGING (Heinemann, 1951)	£80-£100 (£400-£600)
A BUYER'S MARKET (Heinemann, 1952)	£60-£80 (£300-£400)
THE ACCEPTANCE WORLD (Heinemann, 1955)	£40-£60 (£200-£300)
AT LADY MOLLY'S (Heinemann, 1957)	£25-£30 (£100-£125)
CASANOVA'S CHINESE RESTAURANT (Heinemann, 1960)	£20-£25 (£75-£100)
THE KINDLY ONES (Heinemann, 1962)	£10-£15 (£50-£75)
THE VALLEY OF BONES (Heinemann, 1964)	£10-£15 (£40-£50)
THE SOLDIER'S ART (Heinemann, 1966)	£8-£10 (£30-£40)
THE MILITARY PHILOSOPHERS (Heinemann, 1968)	£8-£10 (£30-£40)
BOOKS DO FURNISH A ROOM (Heinemann, 1971)	£8-£10 (£30-£40)
TEMPORARY KINGS (Heinemann, 1973)	£8-£10 (£30-£40)
HEARING SECRET HARMONIES (Heinemann, 1975)	£8-£10 (£20-£30)
THE SET (twelve volumes) (Heinemann, 1951-75)	the set £400-£600 (£2,000-£3,000+)

OTHER NOVELS

AFTERNOON MEN (Duckworth, 1931)	£300-£400 (£1,500-£2,000+)
VENUSBERG (Duckworth, 1932)	£250-£300 (£1,000-£1,500+)
FROM A VIEW TO A DEATH (Duckworth, 1933)	£200-£250 (£800-£1,000+)
AGENTS AND PATIENTS (Duckworth, 1936)	£150-£200 (£800-£1,000+)
WHAT'S BECOME OF WARING? (Cassell, 1939)	£100-£150 (£400-£600)
O, HOW THE WHEEL BECOMES IT (Heinemann, 1983)	£3-£5 (£8-£10)
THE FISHER KING (Heinemann, 1985)	£3-£5 (£8-£10)

AUTOBIOGRAPHY/MEMOIRS

INFANTS OF THE SPRING (Heinemann, 1976)	£8-£10 (£15-£20)
MESSENGERS OF DAY (Heinemann, 1978)	£8-£10 (£15-£20)
FACES IN MY TIME (Heinemann, 1980)	£8-£10 (£15-£20)
THE STRANGERS ARE ALL GONE (Heinemann, 1982)	£8-£10 (£15-£20)
JOURNALS: 1982-1986 (Heinemann, 1995)	£3-£5 (£8-£10)
JOURNALS: 1987-1989 (Heinemann, 1996)	in print £20

OTHERS

CALEDONIA: A FRAGMENT (poetry; frontispiece by Edward Burra; limited to 100 copies; tartan boards; issued without dustjacket) (Privately printed, 1934)	£800-£1,000
JOHN AUBREY AND HIS FRIENDS (biography) (Heinemann, 1948)	£10-£15 (£30-£40)
THE GARDEN GOD AND THE REST I'LL HAVE TO WHISTLE (plays) (Heinemann, 1971)	£8-£10 (£15-£20)
MISCELLANEOUS VERDICTS: WRITINGS ON WRITERS 1946-1989 (Heinemann, 1990)	8-£10 (£10-£15)
UNDER REVIEW: FURTHER WRITINGS ON WRITERS 1946-1989 (Heinemann, 1992)	£8-£10 (£10-£15)
A REFERENCE FOR MELLORS (limited to 200 copies; wrappers) (Moorehouse & Sorenson, 1994)	£15-£20
ditto. Signed Edition (limited to 100 copies, signed by the author; cloth binding) (Moorehouse & Sorenson, 1994)	£100-£125
ditto. De Luxe Edition (limited to 26 copies, signed by the author; quarter goat binding) (Moorehouse & Sorenson, 1994)	£200-£250

WORKS EDITED AND/OR INTRODUCED BY ANTHONY POWELL

THE BARNARD LETTERS: 1778-1884 (Duckworth, 1928)	£15-£20 (£30-£50)
NOVELS OF HIGH SOCIETY FROM THE VICTORIAN AGE (contains Benjamin Disraeli's 'Henrietta Temple', G.A. Lawrence's 'Guy Livingstone' and Ouida's 'Moths') (Pilot Press, 1947)	£3-£5 (£8-£10)
Aubrey, John: BRIEF LIVES and Other Writings (Cresset Press, 1949)	£10-£15 (£20-£30)
Hornung, E.W.: RAFFLES (Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1950)	£8-£10 (£15-£20)
Firbank, Ronald: THE COMPLETE RONALD FIRBANK (Duckworth, 1961)	£8-£10 (£15-£20)
Brooke, Jocelyn: THE ORCHID TRILOGY (Secker & Warburg, 1981)	£3-£5 (£8-£10)

ESSENTIAL READING

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JOHN MEDCRAFT

Dear Editor,

I wonder if I could use your 'Letters' page to ask your readers for some help?

Recently, I finished revising and updating the *Bibliography of the Penny Bloods of Edward Lloyd* (1945), which was originally compiled by John Medcraft. I spent a lot of time consulting his book and various articles, but found at the end that I knew little or nothing of the man himself.

I know that John was a well-known collector and dealer from the 1930s until his death in the early '50s, and that he was also a partner with his brother in a leather goods business in Barkingside, but that's about it.

I'd love to hear from anybody who knew John or have any details, reminiscences, etc, of his life as a collector of, and dealer in, the old bloods. Write to me, Michael Holmes, at: Aughamore Far, Sligo, Ireland.
Michael Holmes, Sligo.

Can any of our readers help Mr Holmes? The sad fact is that the most likely source of information would have been Bill Lofts, co-author of our feature on the penny bloods in BMC 32. Sadly, Bill died in July, taking with him a huge fund of knowledge about the bloods and all aspects of Britain's vast heritage of popular writing.

The BL Catalogue isn't much help, as the *Bibliography* is the only book by Medway listed there. It was published privately by the author.

CHARTRES BIRON

Dear Editor,

I greatly enjoyed your superb and fascinating articles on *King Solomon's Mines* and Radclyffe Hall in BMC 160, and wondered whether your readers would be interested to learn that there is an unexpected link between the two subjects in the shape of Sir Henry Chartres Biron (1863-1940). As stated on page eight of BMC 160, he was responsible for the KSM spoof, *King Solomon's Wives, or The Phantom Mines*, published by Vizetelly in 1887. Forty-one years later, he turned up as Chief Magistrate at the trial of Hall's novel, *The Well of Loneliness*, in November 1928, where he autocratically disallowed a number of distinguished writers, artists and other eminent figures from giving evidence.

Biron was known for his pomposity and self-righteousness, and one of his books was aptly entitled *Pious Opinions* (Duckworth, 1923). Harold Rubinstein called him "pathologically boorish", while Virginia Woolf described him as resembling "a Harley Street specialist investigating a case. All black and white, tie-pin, clean-shaven, wax coloured and carved in that light, like ivory." Richard Parkes, Yorkshire.

INGO SIMON

Dear Editor,

Having read Mr Bird's letter ('Roving Shafts') in BMC 162, I thought that you and your readers might like to hear a bit more about the subject of his query.

Ingo Simon (1875-1964) was a lifelong researcher into the development of the bow. He was a skilled and dedicated archer, and his flight-shot of 462 yards, achieved in 1914, was a world record until 1933. His wife, Erna, was also an accomplished archer, and was Lady World Champion in 1937. In 1970, she endowed a trust for the purpose of conserving and developing her late husband's archery collection, which he had donated to The Manchester Museum in 1946.

Continued overleaf

The Simon Archery Collection consists of archery material from all over the world, and is being continually added to. The Simon Archery Library encompasses a comprehensive collection of related books and periodicals dating from 1792 to the present date. In 1990, a copy (No 120) of *Roving Shafts* was added to the collection, at the cost of £65 (rather more than the £10-£15 suggested by the editor!). In addition, the Simon Archery Foundation publishes important new works on the subject.

If Mr Bird wishes to know more about Ingo Simon or the collection, then he should write to: Mrs A. Wendy Hodgkinson, Honorary Keeper, Simon Archery Collection, The Manchester Museum, Oxford Road, Manchester M13 9PL.

Mrs A. Wendy Hopkinson, Manchester.

Dear Editor, **'CAM'**

I was very interested to read Samantha Tomkins' letter in BMC 163 concerning the children's author/illustrator, 'CAM'. I loved her books as a child, and have since tried to put together a complete collection.

I should point out one or two errors in your reply to the letter. *The Story of Barbara Lamb* was published in 1945 and not 1951, and the title of 'Cam's 1947 book is *The Story of Timothy Tabbycat* rather than *Timothy Tibbycat*. You also missed out two books by Karel Jaeger which were illustrated by 'Cam' — *The Bull that was Terrifico* (1955) and *The Little Banditta* (1957) — as well as her contributions to at least two editions of the *Collins Children's Annual* in the 1950s.

'Cam's books are now very sought after, the 'Three Jolly' titles being particularly elusive. After three years of trying, I have found only one of the four books.

Dr Selwyn H. Goodacre, Derbyshire.

Many thanks for your letter, Dr Goodacre. It seems that I underestimated 'CAM's popularity with today's collectors. In fact, her books sell for up to £25 in Very Good condition, with jacketed copies fetching £35-£45.

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No. 164



This engraving is the work of the Hungarian illustrator, Val Biro. He is best known for his series of books about Gumdrops the little car, but he has also illustrated many works by other authors.